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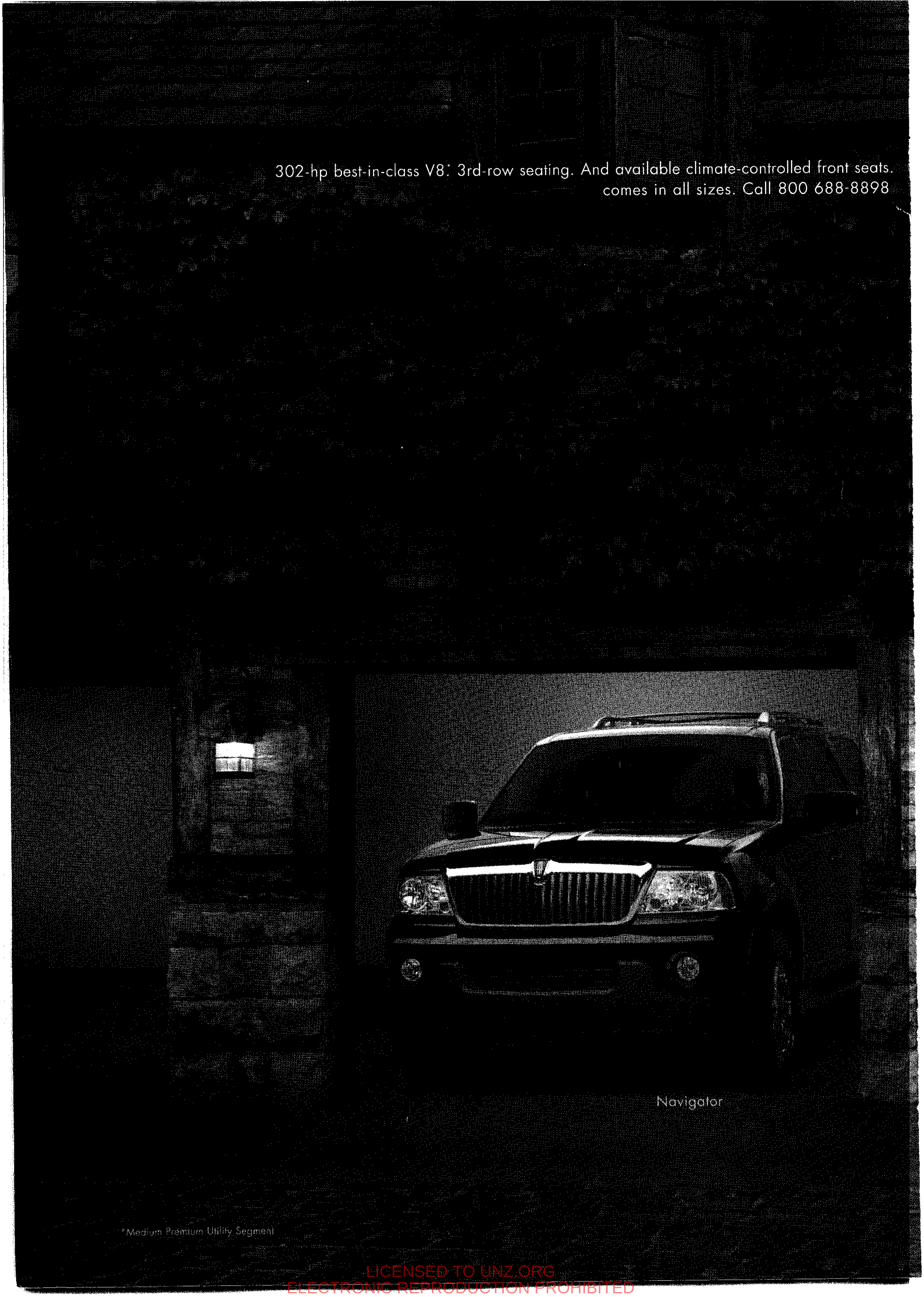
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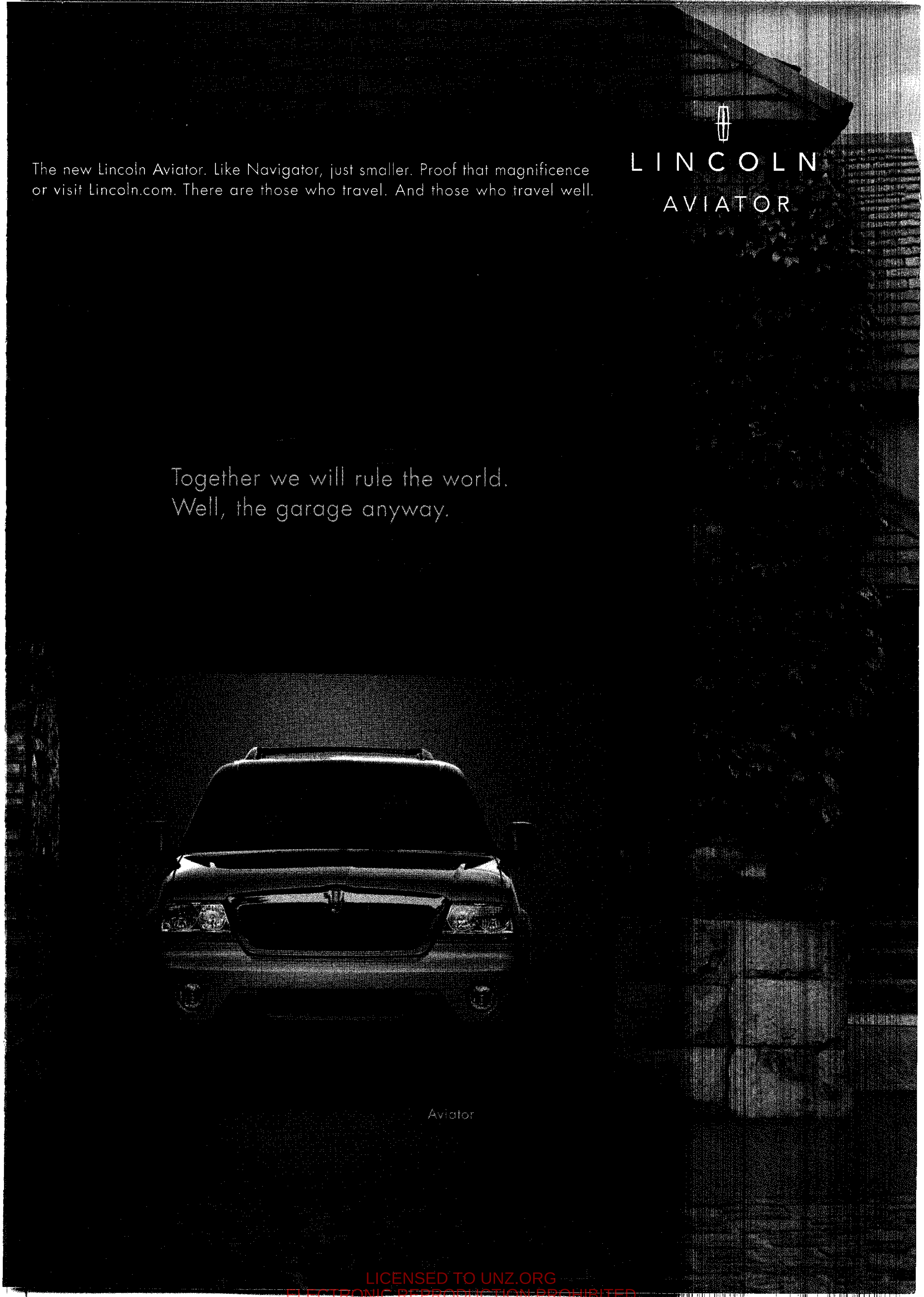
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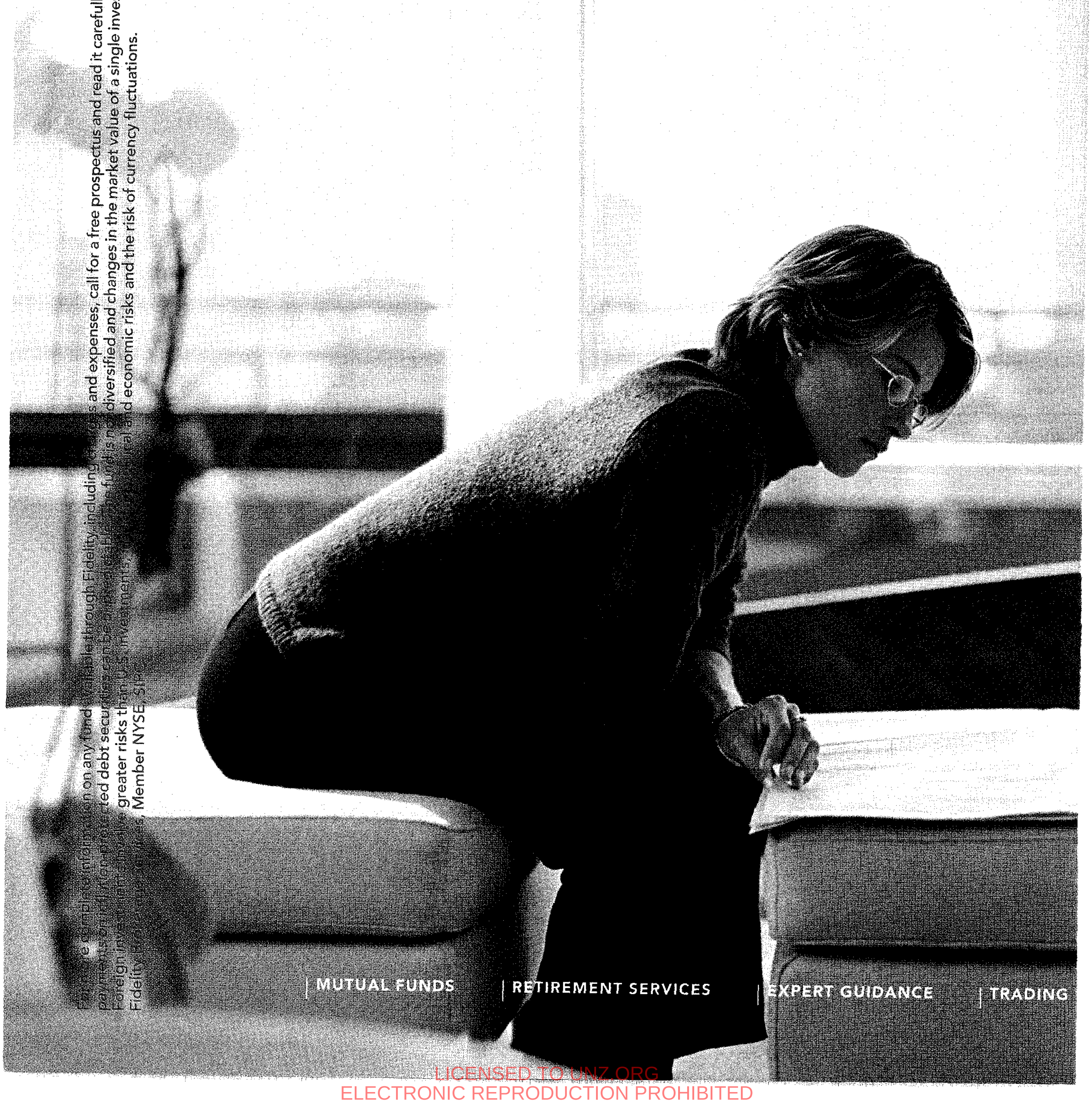

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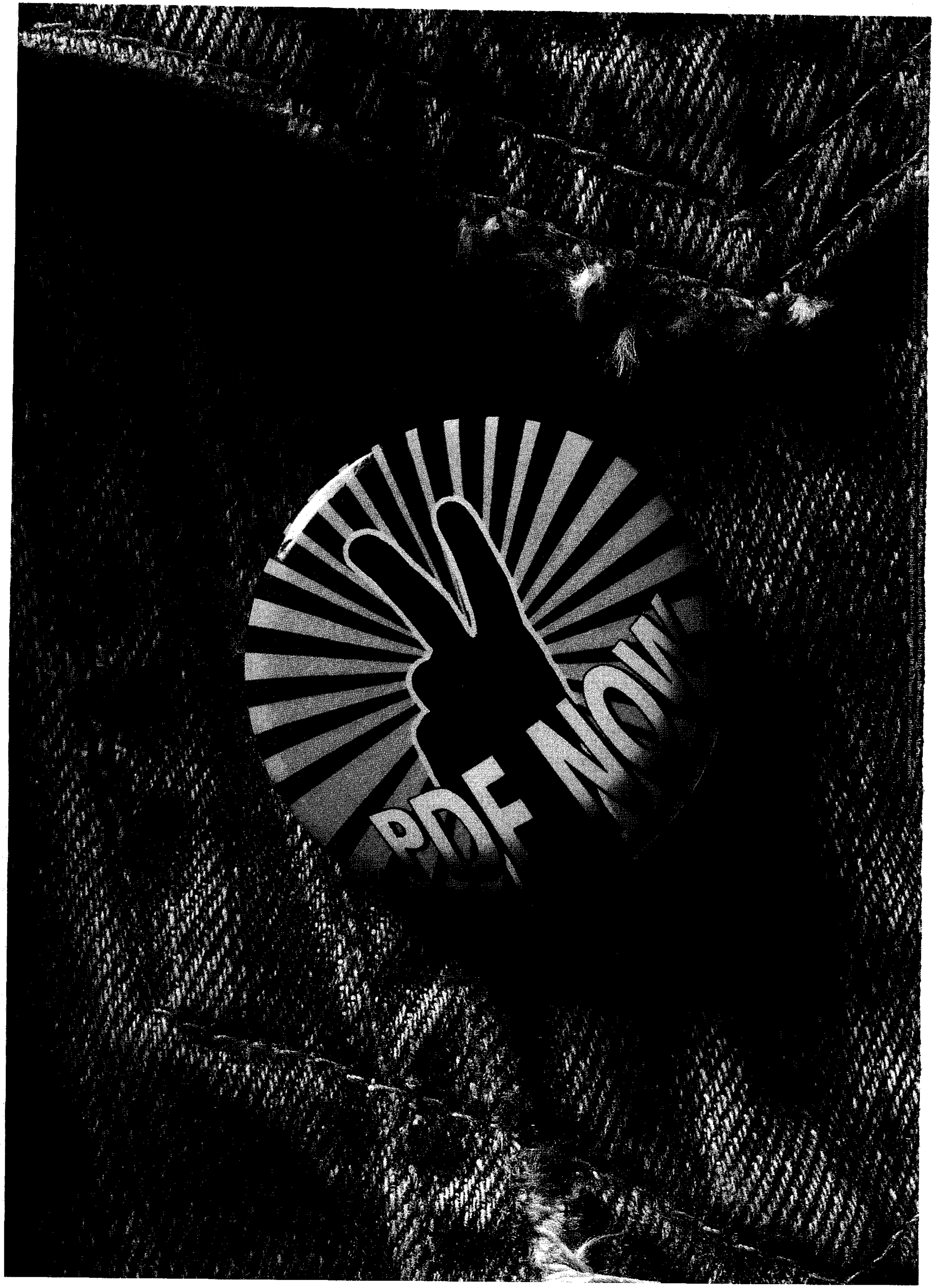
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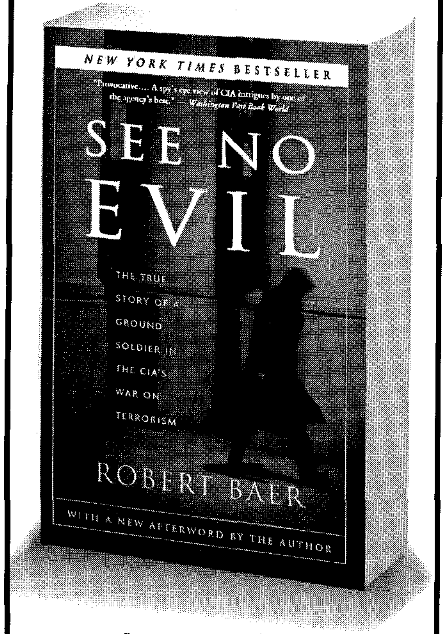
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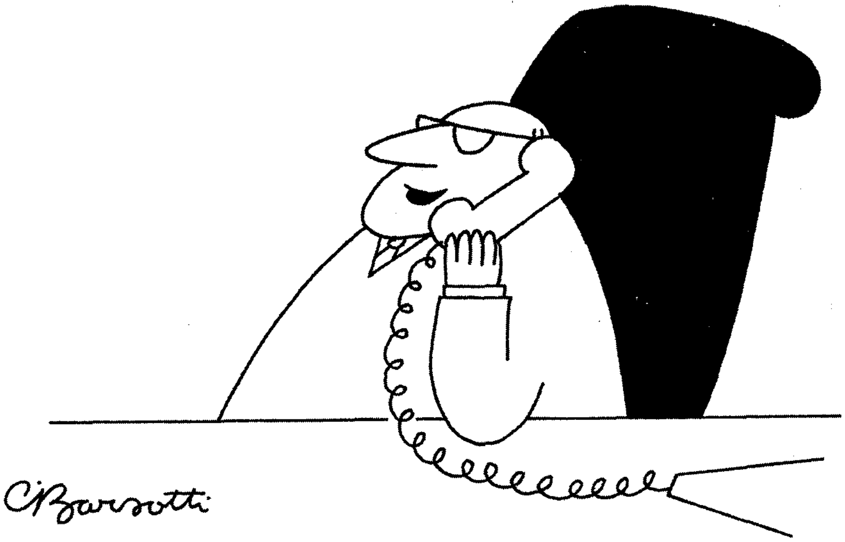

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THE MAIL

MARY McCARTHY'S DEFENSE

As one of the lawyers who defended Mary McCarthy in the defamation lawsuit brought by Lillian Hellman, I was interested in Dick Cavett's memories of how she came to call Hellman a liar on his show (The Talk of the Town, December 16th). He recalls that his notes for the program said that McCarthy wanted to plug an "underrated writer," and that he had followed up by asking her to name some overrated ones. McCarthy, however, had a different account: she told me that the question of overrated writers had come up even before the show, and that she understood that it wouldn't be asked. She said that she had made it clear (possibly to a producer) that such listings were a tiresome game that she did not want to play. Instead, she would be glad to talk about the collapse of her marriage to Edmund Wilson—an appealing topic because of stories that the last straw had been his refusal to take out the garbage. Perhaps Cavett wasn't given the message; memories can also fade after twenty years. Cavett says that he now feels remorse about inadvertently having triggered the lawsuit. Nevertheless, he suggests that it is "possible that I was set up." McCarthy may have wondered that herself.

Peter C. Kostant
Visiting Professor of Law, University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa

A NEW JERUSALEM

Ari Shavit, in his Letter from Jerusalem, writes that "sheer demographics are endangering the Jewish democratic state" ("No Man's Land," December 9th). But it isn't really democracy that demographics endanger; it's the Jewish identity of the state. In a democracy like America's, Jews and Arabs would be equal under the law, with no separate rules on where they could live, work, or travel. As long as Israeli settlers commute from the occupied territories but Palestinians can't live in Israel without restrictions, democracy does not exist in either place. Israel's choices are arranged along a triangle whose points are democracy, the occupied territories, and a Jewish state. Israel must pick two; it can't have all three. I have deep sympathy for Shavit's longing for a tolerant, cosmopolitan Jerusalem, but I fear the trends are against the multiethnic state that would make it possible.

Joel Frangquist
San Francisco, Calif.

Shavit may be of the opinion that Israel shouldn't have kept the territory won in 1967, but Israel has tried to negotiate with the Arabs and has failed. Today, there is no justification for giving up any of this territory, especially to a terrorist entity determined to destroy the State of Israel. It just doesn't make sense for a country to commit suicide. If Shavit believes that his idea of Jerusalem is a "lost cause," perhaps he should consider emigration.

Judith Nusbaum
Jerusalem, Israel

Shavit, seeking to explain the violence of Palestinians in Jerusalem, is puzzled because "the politics of occupation and resistance cannot provide a satisfactory explanation for the bloodshed," and concludes that there must be darker forces at work. But the explanation he rejects at the outset is the right one. Since Oslo, the number of Israeli settlers has increased by nearly seventy per cent. Vast tracts of Palestinian land have been appropriated, and Palestinian areas have been regularly closed. In addition, the offer that Barak presented at Camp David was far less generous than Shavit asserts. The Palestinians were offered noncontiguous land that would have been crisscrossed with Israeli roads, with no control over their aquifers, borders, or airspace. The explanation for the second intifada does not lie in the depths of the human soul; it lies in the politics of dispossession.

Todd May
Clemson, S. C.

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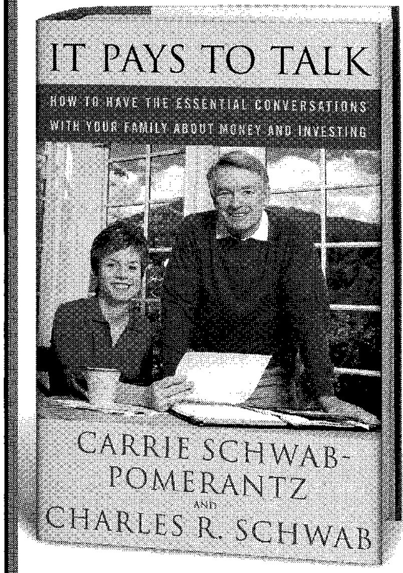
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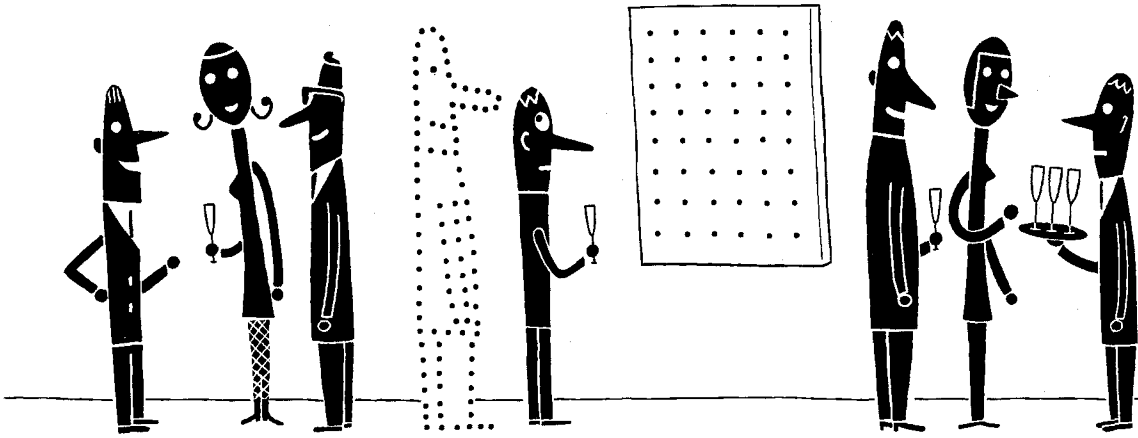

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

BEDBOUND
The Irish Repertory Theatre presents the American première of Enda Walsh's play about a father and his sickly daughter, starring Brían F. O'Byrne, with Jenna Lamia. Previews begin Jan. 17. (132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737.)

COMEDIANS
Jim Dale and Raul Esparza play standup comics in Manchester, England, in the New Group's revival of Trevor Griffiths' drama, set in the nineteen-seventies. Directed by Scott Elliott. Opens Jan. 15 at 7. (Samuel Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

COOKIN' AT THE COOKERY
THE MUSIC AND TIMES OF ALBERTA HUNTER
The Melting Pot Theatre presents Marion J. Caffey's bio-musical of the great blues singer, with Ann Duquesnay in the title role. In previews. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 279-4200.)

CORNER WARS
Tim Dowlin's play about the crack-cocaine trade in North Philadelphia has an original hip-hop score by Strongarm Entertainment/Roundtable. Directed by Mel Williams. In previews. Opens Jan. 19 at 3. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

DONMAR WAREHOUSE
"Twelfth Night" and "Uncle Vanya" have arrived from London to run in repertory at BAM. The ensemble cast includes Emily Watson, Simon Russell Beale, Helen McCrory, and Mark Strong. Directed by Sam Mendes. "Uncle Vanya" opens Jan. 17 at 7:30, and "Twelfth Night" opens Jan. 18 at 7:30. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

FIFTH OF JULY
Robert Sean Leonard and Parker Posey star in a Signature Theatre Company production of the first play in Lanford Wilson's Talley trilogy, directed by James Houghton. Previews begin Jan. 16. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 244-7529.)

JULIUS CAESAR
Karin Coonrod directs a new production of Shakespeare's tragedy for Theatre for a New Audience. With Earl Hindman in the title role and Graham Winton as Mark Antony. In previews. Opens Jan. 19 at 6. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

KEROUAC
The last hours of the Beat poet are imagined in a new production of Tom O'Neil's play, directed by Anthony P. Pennino. In previews. (PC2, 616 Ninth Ave., at 44th St. 352-3101.)

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THE LADIES
Dixon Place presents a play about the notorious First Ladies Eva Perón, Imelda Marcos, Madame Mao, and Elena Ceausescu. Written by Anne Washburn and directed by Anne Kauffman. Opens Jan. 17 at 7:30. Through Jan. 26. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202.)

NEW YORK GILBERT & SULLIVAN PLAYERS
The 2003 season at City Center includes "The Pirates of Penzance," "The Mikado," and "The Gondoliers." "The Mikado" runs Jan. 17-19. (145 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

PAINTED SNAKE IN A PAINTED CHAIR
Paul Zimet directs a new drama by Ellen Maddow about five friends, whose characters unfold as they gather in a mysterious old house to rid it of errant bees. Previews begin Jan. 16. Opens Jan. 18 at 8. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

SHANGHAI MOON
The Drama Dept. presents a new play by Charles Busch ("The Tale of the Allergist's Wife"), set in Shanghai in 1931, about a young American woman who betrays her British diplomat husband and succumbs to the sensual seduction of the Orient. Busch plays the straying wife; B. D. Wong is her Asian paramour. Directed by Carl Andress. In previews. Opens Jan. 16 at 8. (Greenwich House, 27 Barrow St. 633-9632.)

OPENED RECENTLY

BETTY RULES
A kinetic alterna-rock musical, directed by Michael Greif ("Rent"), chronicling the nearly two-decade-long career of a real-life girl band called Betty and its members' battle to keep the group and their sanity intact on the road, at home, onstage, and even in therapy. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 239-6200.)

LA BOHÈME
Baz Luhrmann has reset Puccini's opera in a cinematic Paris of 1957—on the eve of Godard's "Breathless"—and his *moto*-ready cast of young studs looks the part. Rodolfo and Marcello wear leather jackets and boots, Mimi sports a trench coat, and the red-hot Musetta (Jessica Comeau) has hipster slacks and an Ann-Margret kittenishness. For Musetta's splendid "Quando me'n vo," the ensemble gathers on a silverized Parisian street that looks like a black-and-white Doisneau shot come to life. Rodolfo (David Miller) and Mimi (Ekaterina Solovyeva) have terrific voices, and they're both eye candy: he's a young Belmondo to her Eva Marie Saint. When this Rodolfo first lays eyes on this Mimi, enough heat jumps between the two of them to melt the snowflakes. It makes you want to hop a plane to Paris—the Paris in Baz Luhrmann's mind. Note: Three rotating casts perform the lead roles. (Broadway, 1681 Broadway, at 53rd St. 239-6200.)

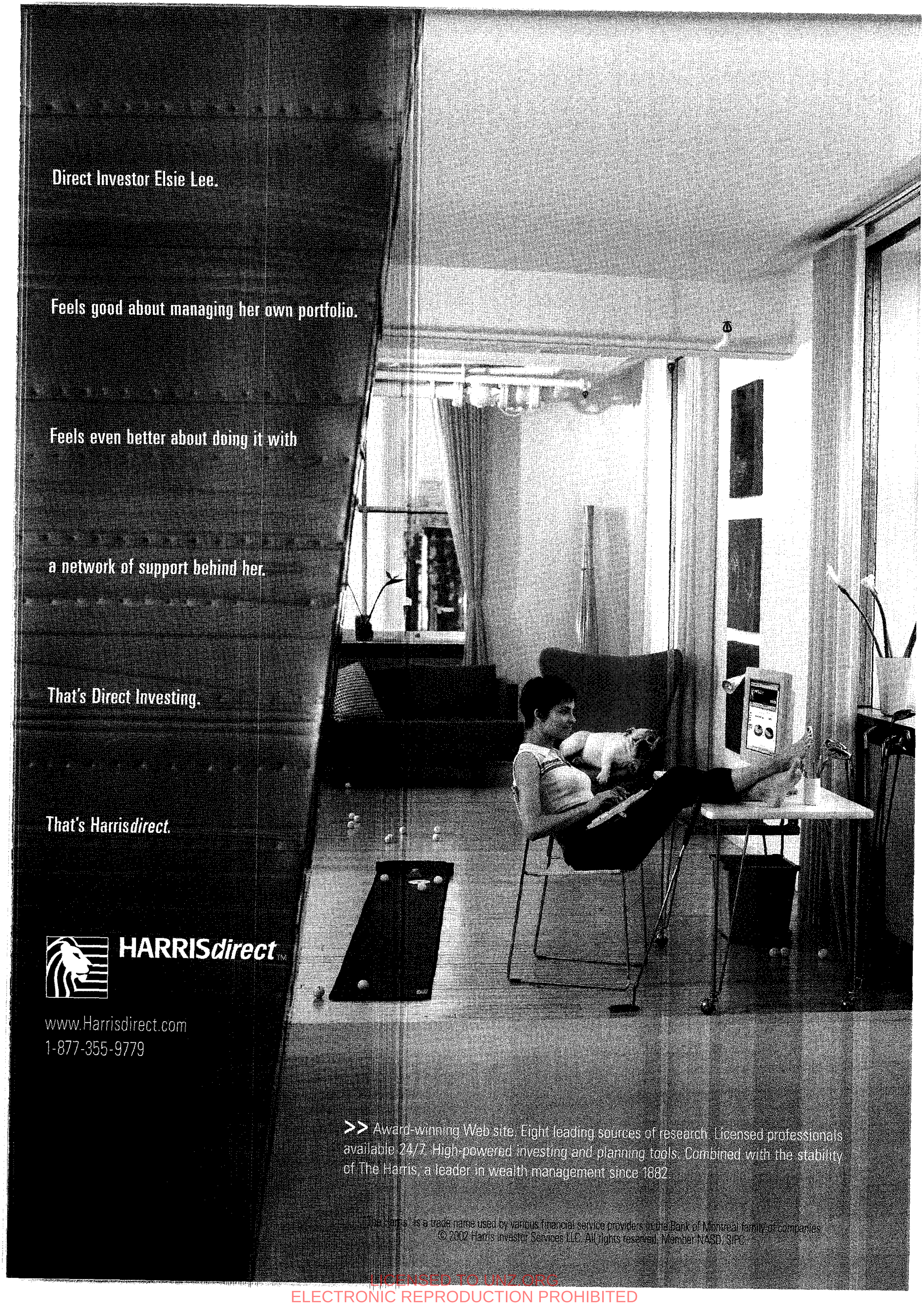
CLASS MOTHERS OF '68
Here is a show for every woman who has ever sacrificed for her kids, and every kid who should be grateful. Does that leave anyone out? On a clever set (designed by Beowulf Boritt) that shifts, scene by scene, into the living rooms and lives of six different mothers, Priscilla Lopez portrays all the moms—each made fully individual by Lopez's gift for accents and physical expression, each connected by anxiety over her child's impending high-school graduation. To echo the working mother's dilemma: However does she do it? Written by Eric H. Weinberger and directed by Jeremy Dobrish. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

DEBBIE DOES DALLAS
A saucy postmodern musical, adapted from the porn film, and well played by Sherie Rene Scott (as Debbie), Mary Catherine Garrison, Jon Patrick Walker, Paul Fitzgerald, and others. (Jane Street Theatre, 113 Jane St. 239-6200.)

EINSTEIN'S DREAMS
The Holderness Theatre Company presents Kipp Erante Cheng's acclaimed adaptation of Alan Lightman's surreal novella—a meditation on the nature of time, and on the life of the twentieth century's greatest scientist. Directed by Rebecca Holderness. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 352-3101. Closes Feb. 1.)

FAR AWAY
In Caryl Churchill's thrilling fable, a not-too-distant totalitarian society is engaged in a war of all against all. Humans, animals, nations, insects, the elements—even gravity—make and break alliances, with bloody consequences. The show's vivid, nightmarish centerpiece, a fashion parade of the condemned, knocks the breath out of the audience. The show is not to be missed. Directed by Stephen Daldry. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 18.)

FLOWER DRUM SONG
Part fashion show, part night-club act, part hymn to Asian-American diversity, David Henry Hwang's update of the 1958 Rodgers and Hammerstein show, set in San Francisco's Chinatown, works far better than the original. With snazzy direction and choreography by Robert Longbottom and vivacious dancing by Sandra Allen. (11/4/02) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)



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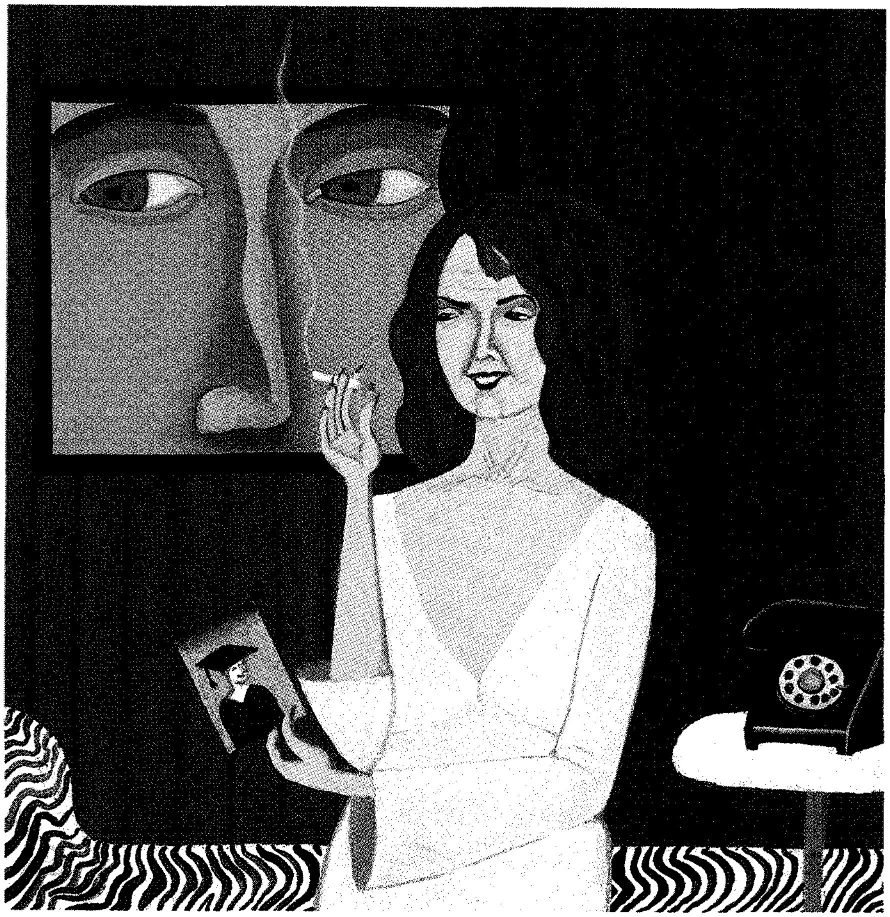
FRANKIE AND JOHNNY IN THE CLAIR DE LUNE
Rosie Perez and Joe Pantoliano star in Terrence McNally's sentimental two-character study about a man and a woman marginalized by life. Joe Mantello directs. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

HANK WILLIAMS: LOST HIGHWAY
To sink any deeper into Hank Williams's blues, you'd need to hop into a pickup truck, drive to Nashville, and buy a bottle of J.D. In Randal Myler's beguiling musical biography of the hard-drinking, softhearted crooner, Jason Petty retraces Williams's journey from hardscrabble childhood to honky-tonk renown. The audience keeps him company all the while, tapping their toes even when he's so lonesome he could cry. Petty's delivery of Williams's songs sounds astonishingly like the original, and he looks the part, too—as do his pointy-booted backup musicians, the Drifting Cowboys, who jolly up the journey with their ready humor and their dexterous playing of banjo, mandolin, fiddle, harmonica, and spoons. Margaret Bowman shines as the singer's fist-swinging, Bible-thumping mother, Mama Lilly. (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 239-6200.)



Priscilla Lopez, in "Class Mothers of '68," at the Clurman.

KATHY OSBORN

INSIDE A BIGGER BOX
In a new play about modern anomie, a woman's husband is obsessed with the artistic merit of his office Post-it doodles, her sister has lost herself in romance novels, and she herself has succumbed to a Twinkies addiction. Trish Harnetiaux's witty script offers a fresh take on the perennial subject of people who feel trapped in their lives. Jude Domski directs a talented four-member cast, on an amusing set—composed entirely of boxes—created by David Evans Morris. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 206-1515.)

JOE AND BETTY
Not your typical Catskills play: in Murray Mednick's latest, Annabelle Gurwitch and Joe Diehl play a poor couple with six kids in a small town in the winter of 1951. He's feckless, but it slowly becomes clear that she's the bigger problem—she's descending into a profound depression. As the layers peel away from the banality of the wife's daily struggle to feed the kids and pay the bills, revealing deeper troubles, Gurwitch's transformation is subtle and compelling. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

LOVE/SAD
In a Studio 42 production, Bajir Cannon's new play, inspired by a Persian folktale, tells the story of a pilot, his wife, and other characters, who search for the meaning of love. The show has an original score by Kabir Green and Tim Jones and choreography by Jeremy Steinke. (Clemente Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St. 352-3101.)

MAN OF LA MANCHA
If hearing "The Impossible Dream" four times without intermission is your idea of a good night out, then "Man of La Mancha" is for you. Superbly staged by Jonathan Kent, the show features a sensational set by Paul Brown that has more tricks than a circus pony, but no amount of proficient talent (Brian Stokes Mitchell is the nutty knight of faith, and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio is the toothsome tart Aldonza) and no amount of high-tech prowess can disguise the fact that this Don Quixote–Sancho Panza cartoon is romantic kitsch. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

MEDEA
In her daring modern interpretation of Euripides' drama, well directed by Deborah Warner, Fiona Shaw enters wearing sunglasses, a cardigan sweater, and a tidy summer dress, the picture of almost demure self-control. She has a lithe, muscular body and a sinuous mind to match, but she is a nervy woman pushed to the end of her tether, her mind and heart racing in adrenaline-pumping panic. (12/23 & 30/02) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

MOVIN' OUT
Twyla Tharp's show about small-town teen-agers coming of age during the Vietnam War era is set to twenty-seven songs by Billy Joel. The band is terrific, and the dancers—above all, John Selya as the hero, Eddie—are positively on fire. (11/4/02) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

THE MYSTERY OF ATTRACTION
The Worth Street Theater Company presents a new play by Marlane Meyer, set in Los Angeles, about tensions in the lives of two brothers, one a lawyer, the other a cop. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St. 206-1515. Closes Jan. 27.)

OUR TOWN
In a marvellous Broadway revival, directed by James Naughton, Thornton Wilder's play speaks as unforgettably now as it did at its première, in 1938. As the Stage Manager—the play's narrator and the link between the worlds of the living and the dead in Grover's Corners, New Hampshire—Paul Newman projects half a century's expertise and good will. God should look like Newman: lean, strong-chinned, white-haired, and authoritative in a calm and unassuming way. (12/16/02) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Jan. 26.)

PANIC (HOW TO BE HAPPY)
In Richard Foreman's new play, a band of modern-day hippies seek enlightenment through mountain climbing, punk rock, and Mahler. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

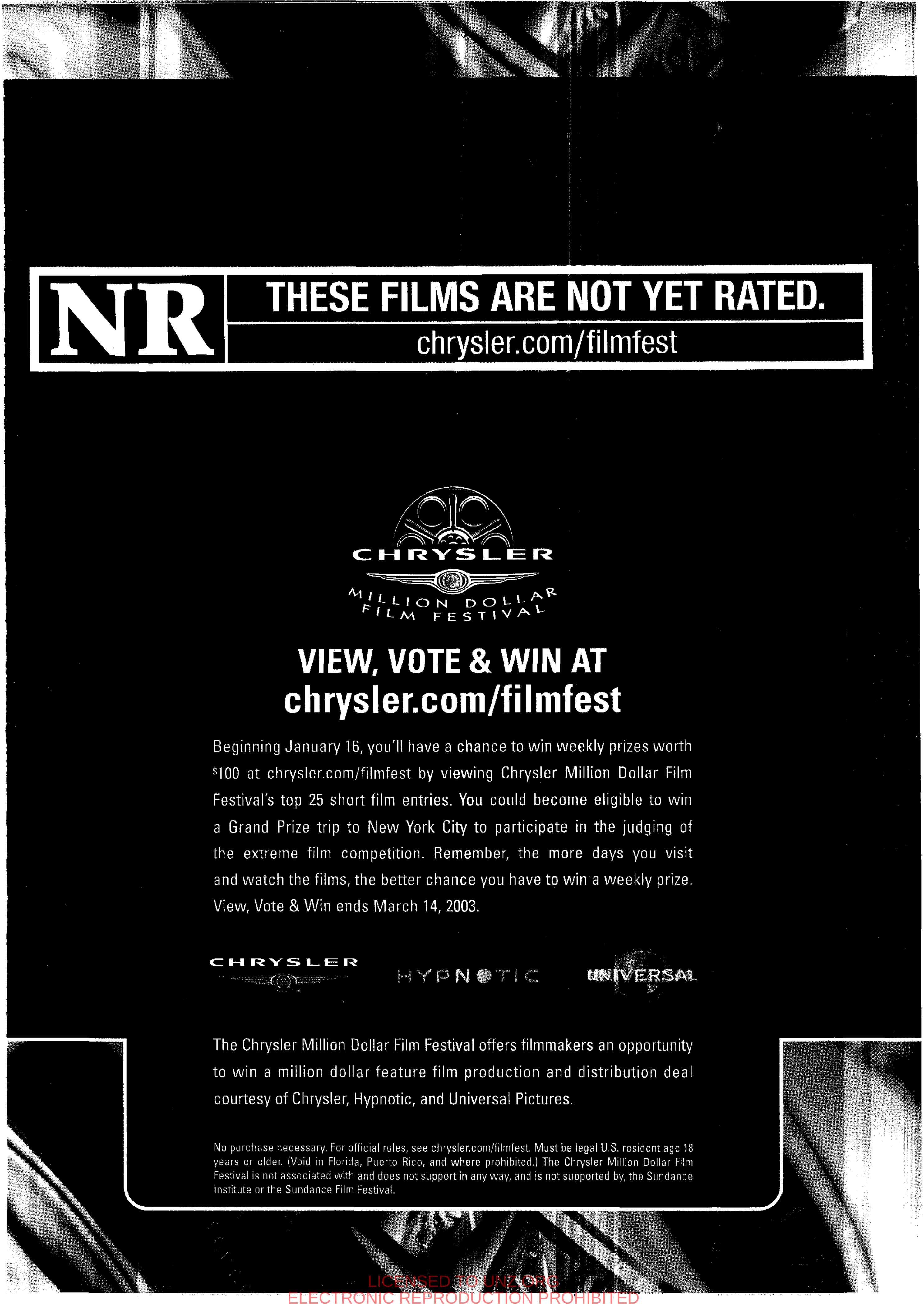
RUSSELL SIMMONS' DEF POETRY JAM ON BROADWAY
The hip-hop legend has brought together spoken-word stylists from his HBO show and from the national poetry-slam circuit to create an exuberant, defiant production. The rap bards deliver poems that are part autobiography, part social commentary—addressing everything from love, America, racism, and terrorism to Krispy Kreme doughnuts. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

SAY GOODNIGHT, GRACIE
Frank Gorshin is George Burns in Rupert Holmes's touching one-man tribute to the unsinkable comic and his more-than-a-sidekick wife, Gracie Allen. It's not just a showcase for one man; it's a showcase for an era. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

TARTUFFE
In a fresh and frisky production, Henry Goodman brings comic Snagglepuss swagger to the role of Molière's pious hypocrite. He earnestly buckles down to the task of seducing his host's wife, played with shrewd levity by the winsome Kathryn Meisle. John Lee Beatty's sumptuous set evokes the Frick museum—incarnated as a busy seventeenth-century stately home, whose fancy-collared residents look like Van Dyck portraits in the flesh. Brian Bedford is effective as the blustering, benighted host, Orgon, and J. Smith-Cameron delights as the tart-tongued lady's maid, Dorine, who never tires of telling the whole household just how foolish they are. A star-crossed young couple, Mariane (Bryce Dallas Howard) and Valère (Jeffrey Carlson), are deliciously fatuous, and Valère's outrageous costume—a blouson shirt, ornate frock coat, and knee breeches—trimmed with frothy bunches of lace and looped ribbon and bookended with a plumed hat and heeled booties—looks like something Carrie might attempt on "Sex and the City" after one Cosmo too many. Under Joe Dowling's well-timed, brisk direction, Richard Wilbur's masterful translation of the Molière verse speeds around the stage, with nary a couplet landing wrong. (American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

THE TEMPEST
The director Padraic Lillis has traded the strangeness and danger that are so often emphasized in Shakespeare's story for a more naturalistic presentation. As Prospero, the wronged Duke of Milan who becomes a magician in exile, Robert Hock seems like any doting father—who just happens to keep a sprite as a slave and have goddesses pay him social calls. Indeed, the stranded nobles who wash up on Prospero's shore are not so much afraid as bemused. The result is a sweet-natured storm that is less about power and revenge than about love and regret. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Jan. 26.)

TUESDAYS WITH MORRIE
Based on Mitch Albom's best-selling book, the play is a love song to a wise old professor who taught an unreflective younger man how to feel. Alvin Epstein plays the mentor—Morrie Schwartz—with wit and heart, and John Tenney is touching as Mitch,



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AND: A calendar of *New Yorker* events across the country

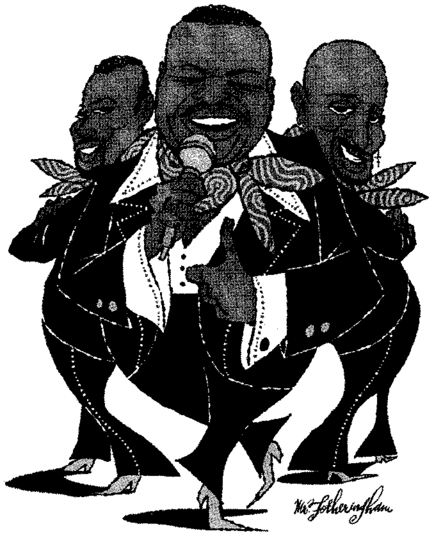
the brusque mentee. Directed by David Esbjornson. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 307-4100.)

LONG RUNS

ADULT ENTERTAINMENT
Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave. 239-6200.
AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4747.
BARTENDERS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 206-1515.
BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4747.
BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.
CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 239-6200.
CHICAGO
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE COMPLETE WORKS OF WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (ABRIDGED)
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.
DANCE OF THE VAMPIRES
Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.
DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 239-6200.
DINNER AT EIGHT
Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.
THE EXONERATED
45 Bleecker Street Theatre, 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100.
42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
THE GRADUATE
Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.
I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE
Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.
IMAGINARY FRIENDS
Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.
THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 307-4100.
MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 563-5544.
METAMORPHOSES
Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.
LES MISÉRABLES
Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.
OKLAHOMA!
Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.
PERFECT CRIME
Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401.
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.
PUPPETRY OF THE PENIS
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.
RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000.
STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477.
THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.
TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING
St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200.
URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 239-6200.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
The season continues with an all-Balanchine program, an all-Robbins program, and a selection of other repertory works. ♦ Jan. 15 at 8 (all Balanchine): "Raymonda Variations," "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze,' " and "Western Symphony." ♦ Jan. 16 at 8 (all Robbins): "In G Major," "In the Night," and "Fancy Free." ♦ Jan. 17 at 8: "Bach Concerto V," "Eight Easy Pieces," "Eight More," "In the Night," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ Jan. 18 at 2: "Le Tombeau de Couperin," "Tarantella," "Fancy Free," and "Symphonic Dances." ♦ Jan. 18 at 8: "Mercurial Manoeuvres," "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze,' " "The Infernal Machine," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ Jan. 19 at 3: "Raymonda Variations," "Pavane," "In G Major," and "Western Symphony." ♦ Jan. 21 at 7:30: "Bach Concerto V," "Eight Easy Pieces," "Eight More," "Robert Schumann's 'Davidsbündlertänze,' " and "Mercurial Manoeuvres." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570.)



Cuba Gooding, the former front man for the Main Ingredient and the father of the well-known actor, comes to town as a solo artist to perform in the "70's Soul Jam."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

"ALTOGETHER DIFFERENT"
For her contribution to the Joyce's annual festival, Donna Uchizono premières "Butterflies from My Hand," an unfinished but promising work in which four dancers struggle to master opposing desires: to hold on and to let go. As the dance begins, tiny Anna Azrieli, folded in upon herself like a chrysalis, hangs from the ceiling, suspended from a strip of red fabric. With a pair of scissors, she slowly snips at the cloth until the bond is severed and she falls to the floor, inert. After a burst of sound from Guy Yarden's electronic score, the light comes up on the other dancers, who float and flail, caught in nervous, repeating gestures as if they were blown about by wind or snagged on a branch. They couple off, break free, then agitate the empty air until they are rematched. The frenetic energy of "Butterflies" contrasts with the program's other selection, "Low," an elegant tango-inspired dance that earned Bessie Awards for both Uchizono and Yarden last year. ♦ Jan. 15 at 8: ZviDance. ♦ Jan. 16 and Jan. 18 at 8 and Jan. 19 at 2: Donna Uchizono Company. ♦ Jan. 17 at 8, Jan. 18 at 2, and Jan. 19 at 7:30: Sara Pearson/Patrik Widrig & Co. (Joyce, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800.)

"VISIBLE CONTENT"
In this powerfully weird tragicomedy, the choreographers Andrea Lerner and Rosane Chamecki dramatize the everyday life of the mind as it responds first to outer stimuli and then to inner compulsion—bouncing back and forth like a Ping-Pong ball. A dancer grimaces or waves as if a gesture had overtaken her, then shudders softly, as if a thought were tunnelling to the surface. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 16-17 at 7. Through Jan. 26.)

"HOLOCAUST STORIES"
Gabrielle Lansner & Company perform several emotionally charged pieces that try to ratchet up the resonance of the Holocaust by embellishing telling personal narratives with dance and drama. The series includes "The Jewish Wife," based on the Bertolt

Brecht play; "Magda," drawn from two short stories by Cynthia Ozick, "The Shawl" and "Rosa"; and a première, "Address Unknown," based on a fictionalized account of a friendship between two San Francisco businessmen in the nineteen-thirties—a Jewish man and a German—which deteriorates after the German moves back to Munich. Compelled by their tragic subject matter, the dramas cannot help but engage, but the dance element here is minimal—motion is used to show feeling, not form—and when it is most present, the movement feels like conceptual underlining of emotions that were strong enough to stand on their own as words. (The Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Jan. 16-17 at 8, Jan. 18 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 19 at 2.)

"FROST PALACE"

In Hilary Easton's beautiful, haunting dance, based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale "The Snow Queen," Kay and Gerda (Aaron Draper and Monica Bill Barnes) dance and play as if in mind-lock, showing the magnetic connection that leaps between a couple too young to know that they are in love, or that love can be lost. When the evil, pantherine Snow Queen (played by the delightfully angular Blossom Leilani, who moves in a sliding harmony of sharp planes), spots Kay, she hisses zestfully and courses her prey surefootedly, knowing that Kay's speed will trip him up. Afraid, beguiled, he lets himself be caught, and she freezes his heart. With Easton's choreography, Dorothy Barnhouse's text, and David Van Tieghem's original score, the story is no longer just for children; it's a parable about the shock an abandoned person feels when a loved one vanishes. But the prowess of the dancers, and the fun they take in their roles, keep things from getting grim—even when the sinewy, sorceresslike blond narrator, Renata Godfrey, chants, "Ice can break everything—skin, feathers, fur—everything except bones . . ." you know to hope for a thaw. Each dancer has a signature style and mood, and tracking the transitions is just one of the pleasures of this intricate dance piece. With costumes by Cynthia Rowley. (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 924-0077. Jan. 17 at 7, Jan. 18 at 1 and 7, and Jan. 19 at 1.)

"JENNIE RICHEE (OR EATING JALOOKA FRUIT BEFORE IT'S RIPE)"

The Chicago recluse Henry Darger was obsessed by fantasies of a battle between violent, sensual monsters and avenging angels, in which hermaphrodite children served as infantry. In the Day-Glo outsider art works that Darger created, illustrating this mythic battle, Jennie Richee was a King's X where the children could find refuge. Mac Wellman's inventive dance-theatre exploration of Darger's vision (a production of the Ridge Theatre) returns for twelve performances to the place where it was workshopped, St. Ann's Warehouse. Directed by Bob McGrath, with choreography by David Parsons, and splendid costumes by Pilar Limosner. Through Jan. 26. (38 Water St., Brooklyn. 718-858-2424. Jan. 14-17 at 8, Jan. 18 at 7:30, and Jan. 19 at 4.)

"DANCE ON CAMERA"

The final week of the annual film festival includes "Music Dances: Balanchine Choreographs Stravinsky," a long documentary by the musicologist Stephanie Jordan. "As an organizer of rhythms, Stravinsky has been more subtle and various than any single creator in history," Balanchine once said. "Each measure has its complete, almost personal life." In her didactic feature, Jordan means to pay tribute to Balanchine's skill at expressing that life, but she can't get past the blockheaded notion that music-minded choreography amounts to music "visualization"—as if each bundle of notes were a physical cue (trill = pirouette, staccato eighth notes = jeté), and the choreographer were merely decoding them. City Ballet dancers spend a good chunk of the film counting out sections from "Agon," "Apollo," and so on. Still, a few minutes of archival footage redeem the undertaking: in a 1963 rehearsal of "Movements for Piano and Orchestra," Balanchine stands before the dancers—among them, a peachy, nearly plump Suzanne Farrell—snapping and pointing like a ringmaster as they move with a fervor that no note-counting could ever explain. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. Jan. 17-18. Call 875-5600 for show times.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

ROLLING STONES

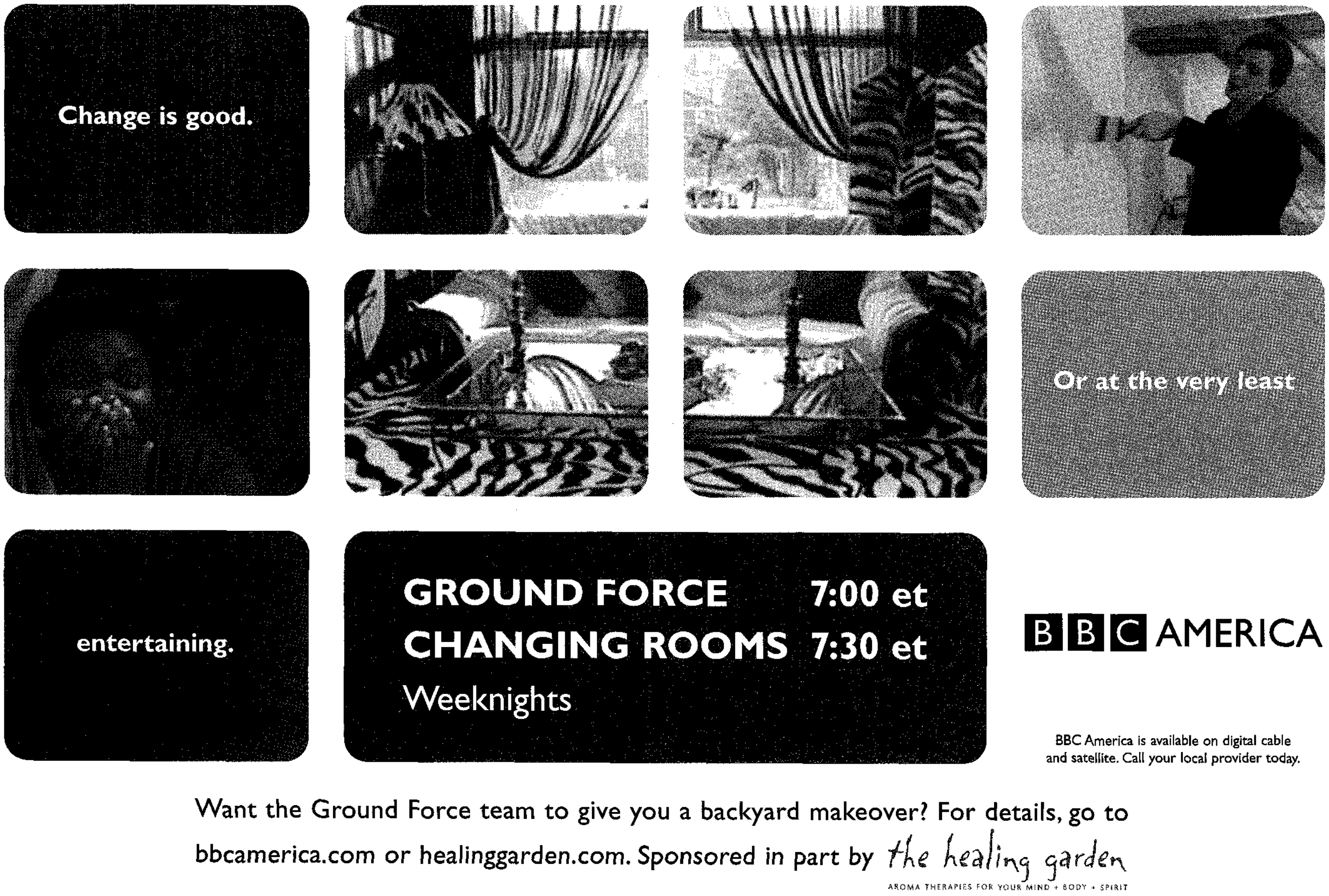
England's newest hit-makers are currently promoting their latest career anthology, "Forty Licks," which has added a few new songs to their repertoire. Don't worry that you haven't heard them; the band's umpteenth tour, like all the others, will be about "Satisfaction," "Brown Sugar," "Tumbling Dice," and other classics. With **Ryan Adams** (see below). (Madison Square Garden. 307-7171. Jan. 16 and Jan. 18 at 7:30.)

RYAN ADAMS

Taking a night off from opening for the Rolling Stones at the Garden, the former Whiskeytown front man and underground heartthrob heads downtown for an intimate show of folksy acoustic rock in the vein of Bob Dylan and the Replacements' Paul Westerberg. Also on the bill are the band Shivaree and the Ottawa-based singer-songwriter Kathleen Edwards. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. 334-3324. Jan. 17 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK POPS

Skitch Henderson and company open the New Year with a treasure for lovers of jazz obscurities. For close to sixty years, the arranger Nat Shilkret's "Concerto for Trombone" has lain dormant. Despite its credentials—the piece was a showcase for the top bandleader and brass virtuoso Tommy Dorsey and had its New York City Symphony première under the direction of Leopold Stokowski—dust has long settled on its pages. The recently rediscovered concerto will be brought back to life by the trombonist Jim Pugh. More familiar fare by Cole Porter and others will also be pre-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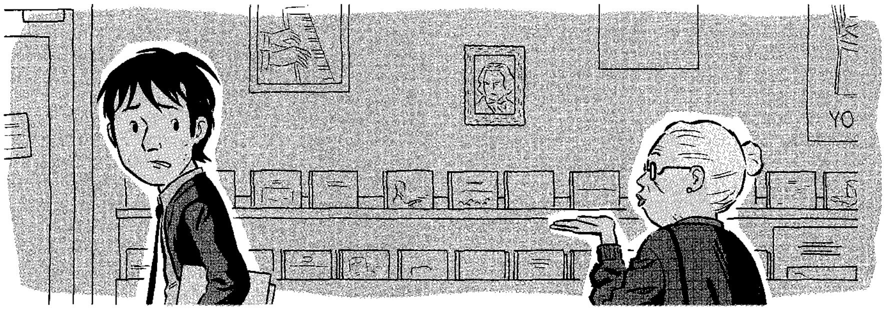
CLASSICAL NOTES

The most distinctive disks of 2002.

"Rimsky-Korsakov: Sheherazade" (Philips)—Rimsky-Korsakov's sensuous masterpiece has never lacked for great interpreters, but this opulent new recording, with Valery Gergiev and the Kirov Orchestra in top form, has a sweep that sets it apart; encores by Borodin ("In the Steppes of Central Asia") and Balakirev are rendered with a startling clarity.


ADRIAN TOMINE

"Adams: Naïve and Sentimental Music" (Nonesuch)—In this grand, arresting work, a symphony in all but name, John Adams synthesizes his conflicting compositional personae—the dreamy romantic and the skeptical modernist—with the visionary detachment of a master. Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, the perfect champions, give the piece their own distinctive mix of lyrical ardor and merciless forward drive.

"Schoenberg: Gurrelieder" (EMI)—Simon Rattle, making his mark as the Berlin Philharmonic's new maestro, saves this colossal late-Romantic masterwork from its own excess with a performance swathed in Impressionist colors and dispatched with boyish energy. Karita Mattila, Anne Sofie von Otter, and Thomas Quasthoff are among the estimable vocal soloists.

"Alexei Lubimov: Der Bote" ("The Messenger") (ECM)—While none of the alluring miniatures (by such composers as Glinka, Debussy, Chopin, and Cage) on this album are especially well known, this Russian pianist's impulsive, jazzlike style—crisp attacks emerging from gentle vapors of pedal—is so hauntingly persuasive that each one seems indispensable.

"Glenn Gould: A State of Wonder" (Sony)—At first glance, reissuing Glenn Gould's 1955 and 1981 interpretations of Bach's Goldberg Variations in one album seems like the ultimate non-event: who *doesn't* have at least one of the eccentric Canadian's Bach recordings? But the impressive remastering of the later performance—using backup analog tapes instead of the stale and boxy digital master—lets us reëvaluate this Apollonian interpretation with the reverence it deserves.

"Rihm: Jagden und Formen" ("Hunts and Forms") (Deutsche Grammophon)—Dominique My leads the crackerjack Ensemble Modern in this not so merry chase for chamber orchestra by Germany's most intriguing modernist, a composer who, not unlike the best of modern architects, can infuse the most rigorous structures with a volcanic, jazzy physicality.

"Shostakovich: Symphony No. 11 ('The Year 1905')" (LSO Live)—Once dismissed as Soviet hackwork, this epic symphony, a tribute to the suffering of the Russian people, unrolls with the immediacy of a newsreel: it benefits from the energy of live performance. This one, by Mstislav Rostropovich and the London Symphony Orchestra, abounds with atmosphere, vigor, and brutal force.

"William Lawes: Consort Sets in Five and Six Parts" (Alia Vox)—Jordi Savall and Hespèrion XXI, his magnificent group of viol players, bring this mysterious seventeenth-century English composer (who died a soldier, defending King Charles I) front and center with a revelatory two-disk set. Lawes brought the viol suite to its mannerist apogee—complex harmonies and lustrous textures dangle in the air, contrapuntal lines dart about and disappear. Monteverdi was his contemporary, but Ferneyhough and Adès are his heirs.

"Susan Graham: French Operetta Arias" (Erato)—A selection of vocal miniatures by Messager, Hahn, Simons ("C'est ça la vie, c'est ça l'amour"), and others, accompanied by Yves Abel and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, is the ideal vehicle for the American mezzo-soprano's disarming style and technical élan. Sheer fun.

—Russell Platt

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sented, by the husband-and-wife vocal team of Marin Mazzie and Jason Danieley. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 17 at 8.)

JAZZ COMPOSERS COLLECTIVE
Ever on the lookout for new sounds, the bassist **Ben Allison** turned to Mamadou Diabate and his *kora* (a twenty-one-string Manding harp-lute) for his Peace Pipe ensemble. As heard on last year's release of the same name, the instrument blends beautifully with the more standard jazz instrumentation, which is no surprise really—Allison has sure instincts when it comes to outré moves. Sharing the bill is Peace Pipe's pianist, **Frank Kimbrough,** another questing spirit whose own trio sets off the pleasures of tradition with progressive zest. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary. For more information, call 995-1552. Jan. 17 at 8.)

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Ustad Mahwash, the first woman to receive the title of *ustad*, or master, from the Afghanistan Ministry of Information and Culture, back in 1977, joins Homayoun Sakhi, a young virtuoso of the *rabab*, a short-necked lute and the national instrument of Afghanistan, for an evening of music from their homeland. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. For more information, call 545-7536. Jan. 17 at 8.)

"THE DRUM MAJOR INSTINCT"
The percussionist and composer John Hollenbeck, the leader of the audacious Claudia Quintet and a recent Meredith Monk collaborator, presents a tribute to Martin Luther King that incorporates three trombones and drums juxtaposed with a recorded King sermon. The piece will be performed in total darkness. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space. 864-5400. Jan. 17 at 8:30.)

BOBBY (BLUE) BLAND AND CODY CHESNUTT
One of the greatest soul-and-blues singers of the past century meets one of the greatest of the new. Bland, who can usually be found opening for his friend B. B. King, has a signature growl—a rumbling call that sounds to the uninitiated like someone clearing his throat but has the unequivocal effect of driving the ladies crazy. Chesnutt possesses the flamboyant stage style (and occasionally foul mouth) of Prince, along with a mastery of acoustic and electronic styles previously demonstrated only by Beck. This show promises to be a highlight of the New Year. (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Jan. 18 at 7:30.)

"JAZZ PIANO AT THE Y"
An evening of decorously pleasing piano playing featuring **Dick Hyman** and the **Bill Charlap** trio. The two are rabid fanciers of the mid-twentieth-century songbook, and their program will concentrate on Michel Legrand, Leonard Bernstein, and a contemporary giant too often given short shrift by jazz musicians: Stephen Sondheim. Hyman and Charlap will perform solos and duets before the latter's smooth-sailing trio takes over. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5500. Jan. 18 at 8.)

"70'S SOUL JAM"
A night of lush romantic ballads with the Stylistics ("You Make Me Feel Brand New"), the Chi-Lites ("Have You Seen Her"), Cuba Gooding ("Everybody Plays the Fool"), and others. Jimmie (JJ) Walker is the host. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Jan. 18 at 7:30 and 11.)

SWEET HONEY IN THE ROCK
The riveting all-female a-cappella group presents its annual children's concert. (Washington Irving High School, 40 Irving Pl., at 16th St. 307-7171. Jan. 19 at 2.)

LI'L POOKIE & THE ZYDECO HEARTBREAKERS
A welcome visit from Jimmy Seraile (a.k.a. Li'l Pookie), the grandson of the legendary Louisiana accordionist Delton Broussard, and his band. (La Belle Époque, 827 Broadway, at 13th St. For more information, call 685-7597. Jan. 19 at 7:30.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Jan. 17: As dependable as a weathered leather jacket, New Jersey's **Smithereens** fused an adoration for classic garage rock, British Invasion songs, and power pop with a workhorse touring ethic. Their days in the limelight may be long over, but the band, admirably oblivious to the fickle tides of fashion, has stuck to its guitars.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Jan. 17: The **Virginia Coalition** is a pop-rock outfit made up of five friends who met in an Alexandria high school. Thanks to a pair of albums and a constant touring schedule, the band has been selling out good-sized venues around the country. Expect an indulgent crowd and plenty of catchy songs from the Coalition's forthcoming release, the aptly named "Rock and Roll Party."

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Jan. 16: The singer-songwriter **Mark Eitzel,** one of our finest poets of tenderloin passion and despair, is in the middle of a month-long Thursday-night residency in the Old Office space.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Jan. 16: The **Division of Laura Lee** is yet another head of the Swedish Hydra that's devouring the indie-rock scene. Ditching the cheeky camp of its fellow-countrymen in the Hives, the Division favors an artier approach that, though no less feral, has a scope broader than simple garage rock. With the stoner-rock Philadelphians the **Burning Brides.**

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg (718-599-5103)—Jan. 16: **Pilot to Gunner,** a Brooklyn-based quartet specializing in complexly arranged, guitar-driven songs, returns to its home borough for a night of sophisticated post-punk. Jan. 18: The **Mink Lungs,** an eclectic local band known for its riotous live performances.

RODEO BAR
375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—Jan. 18: The **Demolition String Band** rides high on Elena Skye's fetching vocals and the virtuosity of guitarist Boo Reiners. The band sings about such typical country subjects as drinkin' and cheatin', but they don't appear to be afraid of anything—they even cover, quite successfully, Madonna's "Like a Prayer."

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope (718-230-0236)—Jan. 15: The **Division of Laura Lee** and the **Burning Brides** (see the Mercury Lounge).

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Jan. 16-18: Three-tenor jokes aside, **Michael Brecker, Dave Liebman,** and **Joe Lovano** are in the top echelon of present-day saxophonists. Brecker and Lovano may have the name recognition, but Leibman, now solidly balancing his celebrated soprano work with brawny tenor playing, is every bit their equal. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through Jan. 19: **Arturo Sandoval** has blown his horn alongside Dizzy Gillespie and seen himself depicted by Andy Garcia in a TV movie, but the trumpet-and-piano virtuoso is more than the sum of his star associations. This Cuban expatriate's Latin roots mingle comfortably with his bebop extravagance.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (582-2121)—The **Classical Jazz Quartet,** featuring the pianist **Kenny Barron,** the vibraphonist **Stefon Harris,** and the drummer **Lewis Nash,** is here through Jan. 19. The spirit of the Modern Jazz Quartet lives on through this group's instrumentation, razor-sharp precision, and fondness for classical reinterpretation. Although the bassist Ron Carter will be replaced by the redoubtable **Rufus Reid,** the blue-chip core of the band remains intact. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Jan. 19: **Randy Weston's African Rhythm Sextet.** With one foot in Africa and the other in the Big Apple, the pianist and composer Weston combines the lyrical smarts of New York bebop with the rhythmic diversity of the African-American diaspora. Percussive energy mingles with pointillistic poetry in Weston's music, and the results can be bracing; this is world-music fusion that never devalues the majesty of its sources. Additional pizzazz will be found in the presence of **Regina Carter,** who wields her violin with tremendous strength.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Jan. 15: A European jazz mainstay since the seventies, the **Danish Radio Big Band** could teach its American cousins a thing or two about imaginative presentation and technical polish. A rare appearance will feature, as special guests, the accomplished pianist **Renee Rosnes** and the arranger, composer, and pianist **Jim McNeely,** a linchpin of the Vanguard Jazz Orchestra. Jan. 21: The **New Jazz Composers Octet** is a smart ensemble bursting with eager-to-make-their-mark players, including the trumpeter and leader **David Weiss,** the pianist **Xavier Davis,** and the alto saxophonist **Myron Walden.**

SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (864-6662)—Jan. 17-18: The **Jim Rotondi** quintet. Did someone mention bebop? The trumpeter Rotondi, like the spirited and technically adept players he's often associated with (the trombonist Steve Davis and the saxophonist Eric Alexander, for example), takes very seriously what was once referred to as "modern jazz." No revivalist though, Rotondi has the passion and focus to find a place for the music in the new millennium.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Jan. 26: The **Roy Hargrove** quintet. Hargrove, the aggressive, historically aware trumpeter, has assembled himself a feisty band full of bright young players, including the saxophonist **Justin Robinson** and the drummer **Willie Jones III,** as well as an old-school veteran, the pianist **Ronnie Matthews,** whose watchful presence keeps their neo-bop real. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)— **"The Legacy of Genghis Khan: Courtly Art and Culture in Western Asia, 1256-1353."** From a show named after a man on the move, you'd expect what? Gilded tent flaps? They're here, but the focus is on an urbane, nearly hundred-year dynasty that was founded in Iran by Hülegü, a grandson of Genghis. Ceremonial and decorative objects and lots of illustrated manuscripts—not to mention dauntingly profuse curatorial wall texts—document a cosmopolitan milieu in which Islamic styles got infused with Chinese ideas. Educational. Through Feb. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (708-9400)—**"Masterworks of German Expressionism"** presents twenty prints by members of the Brücke group, including Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Emil Nolde, and Max Pechstein, as well as artists working between the World Wars, such as Max Beckmann and Käthe Kollwitz. Through Feb. 24. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—Selections from the permanent collection are on display. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Although Gee's Bend, Alabama, is isolated by poverty and a sharp curve in the Alabama River, the group of hamlets there has for generations fostered quilt-making as a virtuoso performance in frugality. Sixty-nine hand-sewn quilts, dating from the thirties to the

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present and incorporating a wild variety of geometries, colors, and fabrics, are on view. Though the women of the African-American community—many of them members of the local Pettway clan—quilt and sing together (a documentary film showing continuously in the gallery broadcasts the sewing circles' amazing harmonies), no two quilts are alike. Each woman has a fiercely individual approach. The visual compositions are electric with abstraction of the most visceral sort, aesthetically inventive and born of necessity. Through March 2. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (769-5100)—The family photographs hung in the first rooms of **"Einstein"** show the future *Time* Person of the Century at twenty-six, looking less like Yahoo Serious than like Alfred E. Neuman in a sombre moment. The still-impish genius had already produced the longhand draft of the theory of relativity framed here; upon later reducing it to $E=mc^2$, he wondered if "the Lord is laughing . . . and has played a trick on me." Display cases full of pipes, Nobel Prize medals, and papers—including letters to mistresses, Presidents, and schoolchildren, and one businesslike note graciously declining the Presidency of Israel—generously illustrate his outsized personality and work. Blinking electronic constructions take a stab at explaining the influential theories, but it's the everyday items that stick with you, such as his mother's note complaining that Alfie's visits home brought so much laughter and music-making into the house that she couldn't get anything done. Through Aug. 10. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

A scene from Birmingham, in 1963, by Bruce Davidson, from "Time of Change," at I.C.P.

MAGNUM

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (849-8300)—**"New Hotels for Global Nomads"** surveys a dizzying range of options for travellers, from the palatial interior of the world's tallest hotel, the Burj al-Arab in Dubai, where the standard room goes for two thousand dollars a night (for seven million, you get a thousand and one nights), to the snug, form-fitting pods where salarymen, ecotourists, and astronauts sleep. Curator Donald Albrecht is clearly infatuated by his subject, and the result is a slightly breathless, digressive show. There are lots of striking projects and quirky details—you can screen a movie while wearing a pair of Eye-trek glasses or sigh over an actual heart-shaped bathtub from Mount Airy Lodge. But the oversupply of curatorial side dishes—music videos, art installations, a huge wall of kitsch postcards—creates an impression of amiable hospitality rather than discernment. Through March 2. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays, 10 to 6; and Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

ANDRÁS BÖRÖCZ
For ten years, this Hungarian-born artist has been making eccentric folk-modernist tableaux out of nothing but pencils: colored pencils, carpenter's pencils, ordinary yellow ones with their fezlike pink erasers. Set within all-pencil stage sets, his slim personages play cards, perform circus tricks, and work at (what else?) drawing boards. Böröcz's whimsy has a self-consciously slender charm, not so far from Saul Steinberg's. Non-pencil-based sculptures, on Purim themes, push closer to straight folk art. Through Jan. 25. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 861-7338.)

ALAN FELTUS
Shut-ins will feel instantly at home with Feltus's honey-colored, languorous paintings. His characters—hollow-eyed Mediterranean brunettes of either sex—seem to be suffering from chronic-fatigue syndrome or dementia or both. They loll around listlessly, opening letters, drinking coffee, undressing (sex itself seems like more effort than it's worth). Feltus isn't going to win any converts among the Theodore Roosevelts of the world, but if you're in the mood for teasing apart his influences (Balthus, John Graham, Puvis) or savoring slow-cooked earth tones, the show is a vapid pleasure. Through Jan. 18. (Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 355-4545.)

"ITALIAN SCULPTURE FROM THE GOTHIC TO THE BAROQUE"
Accompanied by not one but two catalogues, this heavyweight show offers a profusion of gleaming saints, cherubs, and crucifixions, the kind of art not usually seen outside the confines of museums. The earliest works are sweetly sturdy figures by Giotto's contemporary Tino de Camaino. The latest is a single recently discovered clay *modello* by Bernini for the Fountain of the Moor in Rome. Pouting, buffed, perched on a swirling wave, Bernini's version of Neptune is an over-the-top instance of testosterone rapture, a flash card for baroque glamour and excess. In between, there are more than thirty often breathtaking works by the likes of Nino Pisano, Francesco da Sangallo, and Andrea Della Robbia. Through Feb. 1. (Salander O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. 879-6606.)

Short List

AL HELD / GEORGE SUGARMAN
Washburn, 20 W. 57th St. 397-6780.
Through Jan. 25.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

MICHAEL ASHKIN
Ashkin used to make enchanting tabletop models of desolate American places. Now he takes glum black-and-white photos of such sites—typically, some zone of neglect at the edge of things, in New Jersey, the happy hunting ground for this squalor maven. Then he arrays these shots in grids. Bernd and Hilla Becher meet Robert Smithson, only without the Germans' bracing formality or Smithson's demonic wit. Jargon-ridden, humorless texts rake over the coals of played-out academic philosophy. Through Jan. 18. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

MARSHA COTTRELL
Cottrell's digital prints survey a black-and-white geometrical limbo. She prefers planimetric overviews, densely loaded with intersecting formations of gazillions of mysterious widgets. They're elegant, but it's not clear what's at stake, besides a demonstration of the numbing, dazzling capacities of digital draftsmanship. Through Jan. 25. (Urbach, 526 W. 26th St. 627-0974.)

WOLFGANG LAIB
The German artist works in an enigmatic, elegiac vein, with a sense of isolation that's ecstatic rather than forlorn. His barn-shaped block of pale marble surrounded by ivory-colored grains of rice, and his gorgeous "Milk Stone," a white marble slab topped by a shallow milk-filled reservoir, conjure a world of luscious purity where stone can turn to milk. Through Jan. 18. (Sperone Westwater, 415 W. 13th St. 999-7337.)

ERIC WESLEY
This L.A. artist, a standout discovery two years ago in the "Freestyle" show at the Studio Museum in Harlem, has proven the most engaging of young installationists, with a deadpan sass that recalls David Hammons'. Here he presents units of ramshackle apparatus for growing tobacco and producing and packaging black-market cigarettes: New Amsterdam brand, with a lovely logo of a buildingless Manhattan Island. The evocation of a life of low-grade crime generates no end of droll aperçus about the vicissitudes of art in an increasingly hygienic society. Wesley may be habit-forming. Through Feb. 1. (Metro Pictures, 519 W. 24th St. 206-7100.)

"TEENAGE REBEL—THE BEDROOM SHOW"
Scott Hug, who puts together a zine-style periodical called *K48*, has devoted its third issue to teenagerism. He has also designed this welcoming, flamboyant installation, which looks exactly like a teenager's bedroom, complete with dressers, wallpaper, and duelling televisions. On the walls are drawings and photographs by more than seventy mostly young artists, the majority of them quirky, one-linerish, or sexual. The effect, in the end, has less to do with artistic ambition than with a kind of nostalgic voyeurism. Through Feb. 1. (Connelly, 526 W. 26th St. 337-9563.)

Short List

JEAN-MARC BUSTAMANTE
Matthew Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200.
Through Feb. 15.

YAYOI KUSAMA
Robert Miller, 524 W. 26th St. 366-4774.
Through Jan. 25.

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY
Paula Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105.
Through Jan. 25.

MATT MULLICAN
Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 367-9663.
Through Feb. 15.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

MEL KENDRICK
A feast of hors d'oeuvres, Kendrick's first New York show in seven years consists entirely of miniature abstract sculptures. Arranged in groups, they have a distinct family likeness—Kendrick still loves to play zigzags against curves, and he knows how to hit a

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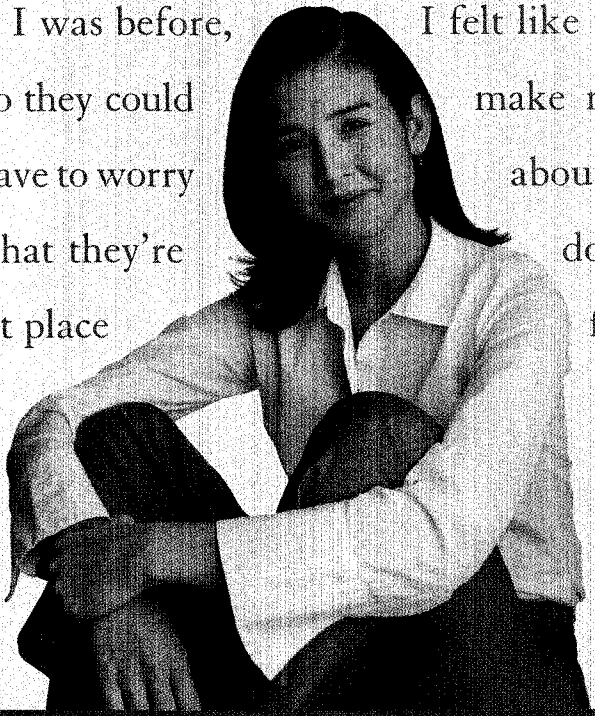

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kind of modernist sweet spot with enviable assurance. That assurance can also be faintly troubling. You get the sense that Kendrick is playing a game he knows almost too well. You wish for more oomph, even as you enjoy a rare, expert playfulness. Through Feb. 8. (Nolan/Eckman, 560 Broadway. 925-6190.)

PETER SORIANO

The mischievous polychrome sculptures cast from polyester resin suggest a line of tools designed by Arp for Gumby (despite their rigid material, the brightly colored biomorphic forms seem pliable). Most of the objects come outfitted with built-in handles, and the most elaborate installation comes with its own nylon straps and moving blanket. One semi-translucent blob the color of chewed bubble gum sprouts red nodules that look as if they were squeezed between the artist's fingers before being cast, like a mud-pie version of Rodin's hands. Through Jan. 25. (Lennon Weinberg, 560 Broadway. 941-0012.)

Short List

DAVID HAMMONS

Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599.
Through Feb. 1.

PHOTOGRAPHY

WALKER EVANS

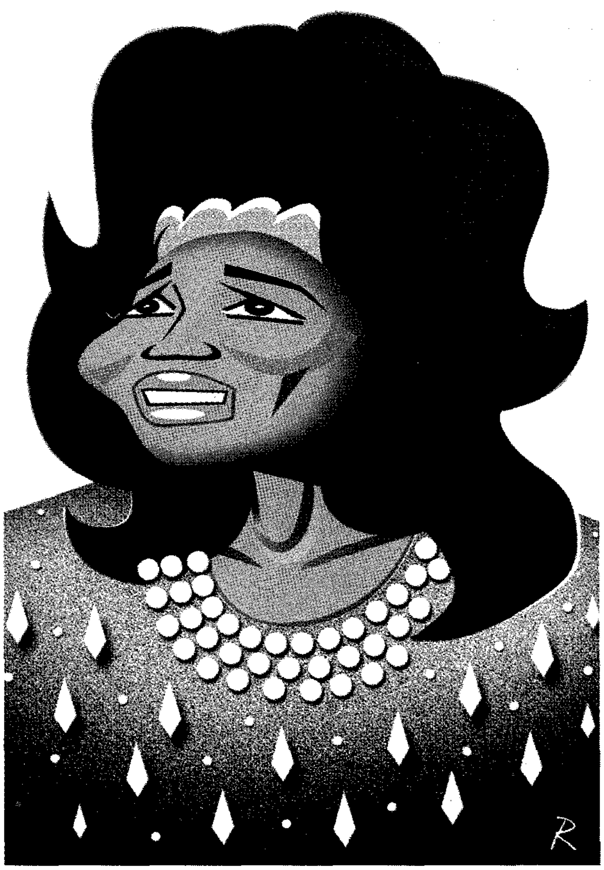
Some of Evans's most revered and widely reproduced images of Depression-era sharecroppers and their wretched world pop up among these thirty-six duplicates from the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. The iconic cross of light penetrating the doors of the haunted breakfast room of the Bell Grove Plantation is just as sinister as always; the renowned pathos of the barefoot boy in "Coal Miner's House, Scott's Run, West Virginia" is as ironic as ever. But right next to the acclaimed portrait of James Agee hang two less-exhibited profiles that show the writer even sadder and more isolated in his thoughts than usual. The seldom seen "Waterfront Poolroom, New York" oozes an ominous filth from stinking sidewalk to corroded awning. Yet the liquid blacks of this American ruin glow with the beauty of an Ashcan-school daguerreotype. Through Jan. 18. (Pace MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-8964.)

"PHOTOGRAPHY PAST/FORWARD: APERTURE AT 50"

As the culmination of its fiftieth-anniversary party, *Aperture* has gathered together the classic work of its own photographers that was strewn around the city last October. A true *Who's Who* of photojournalism and work of an artier stripe will be shown, including pieces by Bernd and Hilda Becher, Mary Ellen Mark, Man Ray, Lorna Simpson, Robert Mapplethorpe, Lázló Moholy-Nagy, and *Aperture's* founders, Ansel Adams, Minor White, and Dorothea Lange. Through Jan. 31. (Sotheby's, 1334 York Ave., at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

"WHO? ME?"

This group show explores an age-old theme in photography—role playing and self-portraiture—but this time around, the curators unexpectedly included something rarely seen: men. For every Countess de Castiglione, Cindy Sherman, or Nikki Lee in lady drag, there is a Man Ray, Dieter Appelt, or Yasumasa Morimura toying with ideas of masculinity and femininity in a way that's just as fun. Men play around, too, and it is their work that stands out here. Morimura's collage of his own heavily made-up face as the many flowers in a Van Gogh painting, Joe Ovelman's creepily realistic "Self-Portrait II (as Michael Jackson)," and Ari Marcopoulos's "Self-Portrait After Velásquez" are especially arresting. Through Jan. 24. (Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223.)



Grace Bumbry sings in the Marilyn Horne Foundation's annual Juilliard concert on January 17 (see Classical).

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 857-0000—**"First Photographs."** The remarkable thing about the English gentleman-scholar William Henry Fox Talbot (1800-1877) is not so much that he invented photography (perfecting the negative-positive process in the early eighteen-forties) but that he immediately followed his scientific achievements with artistic ones. His work is a perfect balance of the values and aesthetics of the Industrial Revolution and the Romantic movement. This is the first-ever comprehensive exhibition of his work in America, and what's truly astounding is that the show includes almost every style of photography as we know it now: portraiture, landscape, architectural, still-life, botanical, allegorical, and travel are all present. While Talbot's "photogenic drawings," as he originally called them, might not blow away the conceptualists among us, the sheer breadth of his output and expanse of his curiosity will. ♦ **"Time of Change."** This tiny gem of a show couldn't be better timed. There are only twenty-five pictures here, taken between 1961 and 1965, of a few earthshaking moments and other, quieter moments in the civil-rights movement. Bruce Davidson rode with the Freedom Riders from Montgomery to Jackson and snapped a regal young black woman lost in song as the National Guard and angry white hecklers massed just outside her bus window. He was in Kelly Ingram Park as Bull Connor turned the fire hoses on the protesters in Birmingham and lost in the crowd on the Mall as Martin Luther King, Jr., gave his "I Have a Dream" speech. Davidson's picture of a car with a blood-soaked front seat, in which Viola Liuzzo was shot to death by Klansmen, is devastating in its banal finality. A straightforward portrait of a schoolgirl with a plastic raincoat covering her Sunday best oozes with the stoic dignity and anger that took the marchers forward. ♦ **"Weegee's Trick Photography."** All shows through Feb. 16. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

NICK HOOKER

Briggs Robinson, 527 W. 29th St. 560-9075.
Through Jan. 18.

ANDREW MOORE

Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.
Through Jan. 25.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S

Americana Week takes the city by storm. Jan. 16 at 10:15 A.M.: The first of five sessions of "Important Americana" features lithographs and engravings by George Catlin, Currier and Ives, and others. ♦ Jan. 16 at 2: Asian porcelain, including an extensive Chinese export armorial dinner service, circa 1785. ♦ Jan. 17 at 10:15 A.M.: A sale beginning with an unusually impressive range of silver (including a grand "Japanese-style" tea-and-coffee set by Tiffany & Co., circa 1878) concludes with a selection of miniatures (by John Singleton Copley, among others). ♦ Jan. 17 at 2: Furniture. A Queen Anne walnut easy chair attributed to John Welch, circa 1740, and a Chippendale mahogany bombé chest of drawers (expected to bring up to one and a half million dollars) are highlights of the sale. ♦ Jan. 19 at 11 A.M.: Edward Hicks's "Penn's Treaty with the Indians" crowns a concluding session of folk art. ♦ Jan. 18 at 2: Furniture, silver, and decorative art works from a private collection. A sale of property from the Appell-family collection follows immediately afterward. ♦ Jan. 19 at approximately noon: "To Arms!," a sale of items from William H. Guthman's collection of uniforms, canteens, hats, musical instruments, and other accoutrements of American militias from around the time of the Revolution and the War of 1812. ♦ Jan. 21 at 10:15 A.M.: Old Master drawings. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

Jan. 15 at 10 A.M.: The monthly House Sale, a selection of furniture and decorations at moderate prices. ♦ Jan. 16-17 at 10 A.M.: American furniture, silver, scrimshaw, folk art, and prints. ♦ Jan. 17 at 2: Pennsylvania German folk art from the collection of Rose Anna and John Kolar. ♦ Jan. 18 at 10 A.M. and 2: Waterfowl decoys from the collection of the renowned outdoorsman Russell B. Aitken. A pintail-drake decoy from 1910, by the Massachusetts carver Elmer Crowell (estimated to bring up to half a million dollars), is the highlight of the sale. ♦ Jan. 21 at 10 A.M. and 2: British ceramics, Chinese export porcelain, and maritime art (by Robert Salmon, William Howard Yorke, and others). (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 636-2000.)

NEW YORK CERAMICS FAIR

Forty international dealers offer a range of items. (National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 289-0496. Jan. 16-19.)

ANTIQUES AT THE ARMORY

A hundred dealers present a selection of American and European folk art and decorative objects. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 26th St. 255-0020. Jan. 17-19.)

WINTER ANTIQUES SHOW

The prestigious show of fine art, furniture, and decorative art works returns. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 67th St. 718-292-7392. Jan. 17-26.)

ANTIQUES AT THE PIERS

The first of two weekends of folk art, Americana, furniture, porcelain, and more, offered by more than three hundred dealers. (Piers 90 and 92, Twelfth Ave. at 50th and 52nd Sts. 255-0020. Jan. 18-19.)

ALISTAIR SAMPSON ANTIQUES

The firm, in association with Chelsea Editions and Cora Ginsburg, holds its annual winter exhibition of English antiques, country furniture, textiles, and accessories. (Chelsea Editions Showrooms, 232 E. 59th St. 758-0005. Jan. 18-26.)

ROBERT RISKO

CLASSICAL MUSIC

OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

Most of the pleasures in this latest revival of Franco Zeffirelli's 1990 production of **"Don Giovanni"** come from the servant class: Richard Bernstein brings a vigorous baritone and a slashing comic talent to the role of Leporello, the Don's hapless man Friday, and the pair of Rebecca Evans and Oren Gradus make for a very appealing Zerlina and Masetto, adroitly mixing firm and honest vocalism with rebellious backstairs charm. But in the roles of the high and mighty, Dmitri Hvorostovsky (always an inescapably seductive Don), Barbara Frittoli, Carol Vaness, and Michael Schade, while excellent, seem to be saving their full energy for some lucky future audience. (The distinguished veteran Kurt Moll is the Commendatore.) The conducting of Sylvain Cambreling is intelligent and assured, but he is not the shaping force that this august work really needs. (Jan. 15 at 8.) ♦ With Nicole Heaston, in her début, replacing Evans. (Jan. 18 at 8.) ♦ Sonja Frisell's 1988 staging of **"Aida,"** the crown jewel among the Met's more conservative productions, uses breathtaking sets and resplendent costumes to create a world that matches the grandeur and mystery of Verdi's music—and transcends the star power of any particular cast. Still, this one is hardly cause for complaint: Deborah Voigt steps into the title role this week, heading a roster that also includes Larissa Diadkova, Richard Margison (as Radames), Frederick Burchinal, and Robert Lloyd; Marco Armiliato conducts. (Jan. 16 at 8.) ♦ With Dolora Zajick, Mark Delavan, and Eric Halfvarson replacing Diadkova, Burchinal, and Lloyd. (Jan. 21 at 8.) ♦ While not the earliest of Janáček's operas, **"Jenůfa"** (completed, after a long creative struggle, in 1904) is the first in which his mature style came together—passionate vocal lines underpinned by the quirky, ear-catching rhythms of Czech speech patterns, borne aloft by an orchestral stream of nervous, shimmering lyricism. It's also the earliest one for which the crowds still gather, and for its new production (by Olivier Tambosi) the house offers a cast headed by Karita Mattila (in the title role), Deborah Polaski, Kim Begley, and Christopher Ventris; Vladimir Jurowski conducts Charles Mackerras's critical edition of the score. (Jan. 17 at 8.) ♦ The final performance this season of **"Carmen,"** with Denyce Graves (in the title role), Neil Shicoff, Mary Dunleavy, and Ludovic Tézier; Yves Abel. (Jan. 18 at 1.) ♦ The season première of Mozart's **"Die Entführung aus dem Serail,"** with Alexandra Deshorties, Jennifer Welch-Babidge, Paul Groves, Barry Banks, Kurt Moll, and Matthias von Stegmann (in the speaking role of Pasha Selim); James Levine. (Jan. 20 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

BRONX OPERA

The Bronx-based company, now in its thirty-fifth season of presenting opera in English, brings its fully staged production (with orchestra and a cast of able young professionals) of Smetana's **"The Bartered Bride"** to Manhattan for the weekend. Michael Spierman conducts. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. Jan. 17-18 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

The first concert of Zubin Mehta's two-week return engagement with the orchestra features the kind of high-octane repertory that he favored during his long tenure as music director—Wagner (several excerpts from "Gotterdämmerung") and Strauss (including "Don Juan" and the final scene from "Salome"). The soprano Jane Eaglen is his guest. (Jan. 16 at 7:30 and Jan. 17-18 at 8.) ♦ In an evocation of the "monster concerts" that flourished in nineteenth-century Gotham, the orchestra joins the members of the Israel Philharmonic onstage for a gala program of Tchaikovsky (the Symphony No. 4 in F Minor, with Mehta) and Mahler (the Symphony No. 1 in D Major, conducted by Lorin Maazel). (Jan. 21 at 7.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5656.)

BUDAPEST FESTIVAL ORCHESTRA

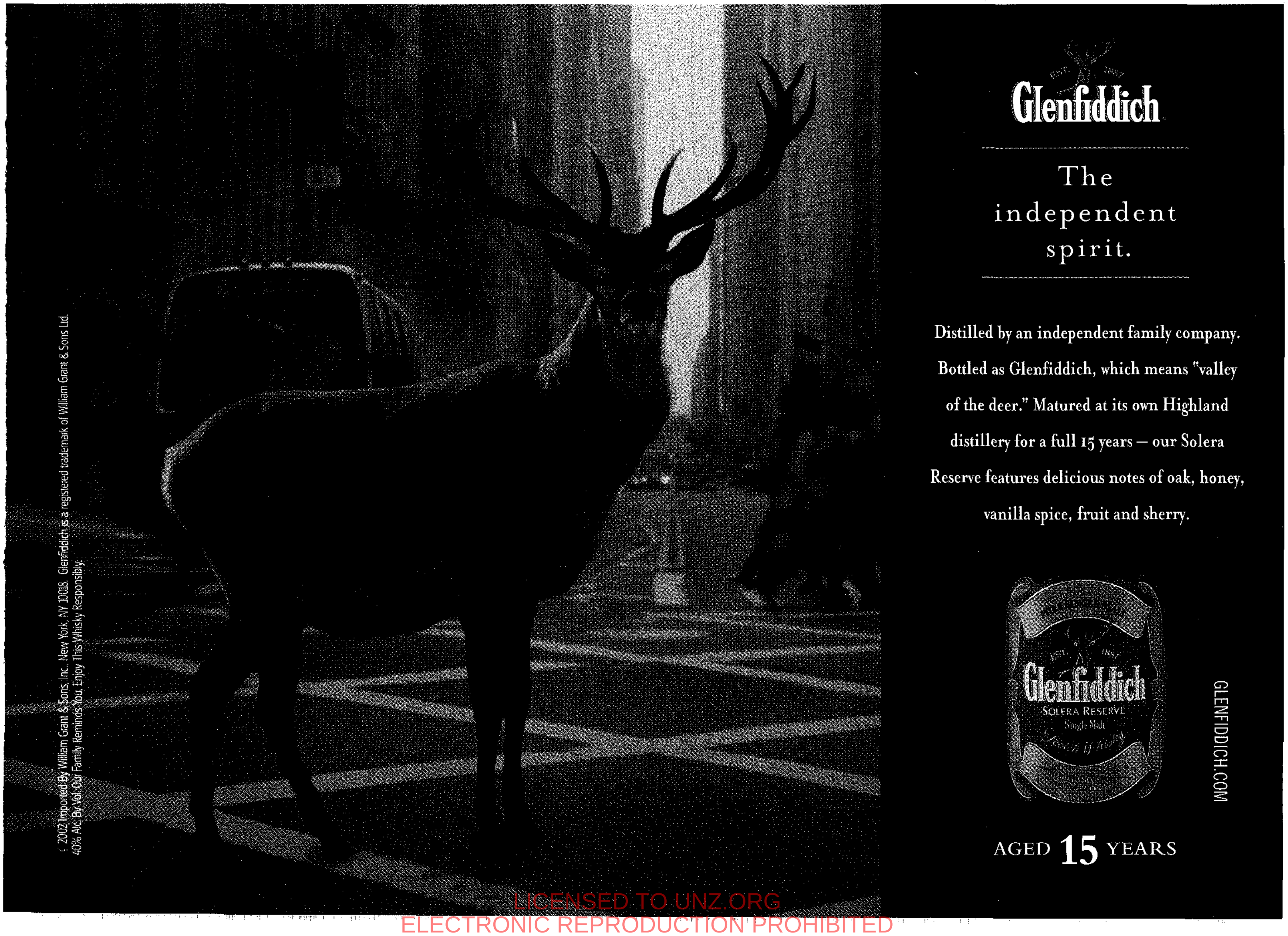
Jan. 15 at 8: Jean-Yves Thibaudet, a consummately French pianist of glittering surfaces and elegant expressivity, adds a bit of glamour to a German-Hungarian program of Liszt (the symphonic poem "Tasso" and the "Totentanz," for piano and orchestra) and Strauss ("Also Sprach Zarathustra"). Iván Fischer conducts. ♦ Jan. 16 at 8: Fischer, the orchestra's music director, returns to lead music by Wagner (orchestral excerpts from "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg" and "Tristan und Isolde") and Liszt (the lofty "Faust-Symphonie," in its version without chorus). (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800.)

LUTHER COLLEGE NORDIC CHOIR

Weston Noble, one of a small group of legendary choirmasters who have made the Upper Midwest a haven for first-rate choral singing, celebrates his fifty-fifth year as director of the Nordic Choir at Iowa's Luther College with an appearance at Alice Tully Hall. Music by Bach, Hassler, Poulenc, and others will grace the program. (721-6500. Jan. 18 at 8.)

CARNEGIE HALL CHORAL WORKSHOP: BACH'S MASS IN B MINOR

Since the singer and conductor Peter Schreier, the most sensitive and insightful lieder-and-oratorio tenor of the last forty years, knows the Bach repertory inside out, he's a natural choice to follow in the footsteps of Robert Shaw, who founded this annual Carnegie Hall event some twelve years ago. Some sixty-five choral singers and conductors, prepared by Vance George, will sing the Mass



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under Schreier's direction, with the Orchestra of St. Luke's; the vocal soloists include the soprano Karina Gauvin and the tenor Marcus Ullmann. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Jan. 19 at 2.)

RECITALS

BARGEMUSIC
The young American pianist Jonathan Biss provides a sustaining voice in this weekend's programs. Jan. 16-17 at 7:30: Miriam Fried performs a concert of violin sonatas by Janáček, Brahms (the Sonata No. 1 in G Major), and Schumann. ♦ Jan. 18 at 7:30 and Jan. 19 at 4: Biss, beginning the program with Berg's Sonata, Op. 1, Beethoven's Sonata in A-Flat Major, Op. 110, and Schoenberg's "Six Little Pieces," goes on to partner the violinist Mark Peskanov, the violist Toby Hoffman, and the cellist Samuli Ornstromer in Brahms's Piano Quartet in A Major. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

NORTH RIVER MUSIC SERIES: "LIKE JUICY PEACHES"
The German-American composer Stefan Hakenberg—who, after stints in Boston and Korea, has finally settled down in Juneau, Alaska—enjoys a retrospective of his playfully eclectic works for both Western and Asian instruments (including "Stump," inspired by a short story by Philip Gourevitch), performed by musicians from such ensembles as Orpheus and the Met Orchestra. (Greenwich House Music School, 46 Barrow St. 242-4770. Jan. 16 at 8.)

DAVID LANG'S "PSALMS WITHOUT WORDS"
Like his fellow Bang on a Can composers, Lang has been exploring his Jewish heritage in his recent work, giving it a depth and richness of texture it previously lacked. This new piece is not for voices, but for a virtuosic solo pianist who can make sense of a polyphonic fabric of as many as eight different psalm "settings" at once. Steve Reich, whose technique of spinning instrumental lines out of speech patterns surely influenced the piece, will speak with Lang onstage; Andrew Zolinsky performs the world première. (Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, Amsterdam Ave. at 76th St. 646-505-5708. Jan. 16 at 8.)

"MENDELSSOHN: A MIRACULOUS LIFE"
In the second of her three concerts celebrating the life and work of the gentle-hearted Romantic genius, Ruth Laredo performs a program commemorating the day Chopin visited him in Leipzig. The concert will include music by both composers (including Chopin's Cello Sonata, with Nathaniel Rosen), as well as a discussion and some slides of Mendelssohn's paintings. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 570-3949. Jan. 17 at 7.)

MARILYN HORNE FOUNDATION: "THE SONG CONTINUES 2003"
This mini-festival, an annual feature of Juilliard's winter schedule, celebrates not only the brightest young American vocal talents but also some of the more seasoned figures they can look to as models. So while "Opera Composers in Song," the final concert, will be an opportunity for the singers Jennifer Aylmer, Keri Alkema, Eric Cutler, and James Westman (accompanied by J. J. Penna and the redoubtable Martin Katz) to shine in music by such composers as Rossini, Bizet, Puccini, Argento, and Corigliano, it will also feature an appearance by the distinguished mezzo-soprano Grace Bumbry (still in excellent voice in her mid-sixties), whose recent recitals have been the stuff of an astonishing comeback. (Jan. 17 at 7:30.) ♦ Note: The concert is preceded by a series of three master classes, given by Bumbry, Brian Zeger, and Marilyn Horne, respectively. (Jan. 15-16 at 4 and Jan. 17 at 1.) (Juilliard Theatre. For tickets to all events, call 721-6500.)

NEW YORK COLLEGIUM
The bass Curtis Streetman leads the group's players and singers in "The Musical Life of Samuel Pepys," a tribute to Restoration England that will include music by Purcell, Blow, Carissimi, and Pepys himself. (Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 717-9246. Jan. 17 at 8.)

CHAMBER MUSIC AMERICA MARATHON
The organization, which invaluably funds and supports American chamber music of all kinds, celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary with an eight-hour binge that will include appearances by such ensembles as Anonymous 4, Ethel, Music from China, Kamikaze Ground Crew, and, to top it all off, the Juilliard String Quartet (playing Beethoven). (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Jan. 18 at 3.)

SUNDAYS ON THE ISLAND
The brunchtime series on City Island presents one of its most enticing concerts of the season—an appearance by the velvet-voiced mezzo-soprano Mary Nessinger, along with the cellist Ted Mook and the pianist Marija Stroke. The program includes music by Falla, Piazzolla, Rorem, Ravel, and Harold Meltzer (two songs based on the novel "Silas Marner"). (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., the Bronx. 212-927-9194. Jan. 19 at 12:30.)

MUSIC BEFORE 1800 SERIES: ELLEN HARGIS AND PAUL O'DETTE
The renowned soprano-and-lute duo perform music, mostly about love, by Lully, Rossi, Vallet, and others. (Corpus Christi Church, 529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Jan. 19 at 4.)

GARRICK OHLSSON: "BUSONI AT THE KEYBOARD"
In the first of three programs, Ohlsson performs music by the towering composer-pianist and by two composers he revered, Liszt and Bach (including, on this concert, the Chromatic Fantasy and Fugue). (Alice Tully Hall. 721-6500. Jan. 19 at 5.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY CHAMBER PLAYERS
Performing music by Bach, Handel, Mozart, and Respighi ("Il Tramonto," a lustrous setting of Shelley, with the soprano Christine Goerke). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 799-1259. Jan. 20 at 2 and 8.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

READINGS
Jan. 15 at 6:30: Selected Shorts starts its nineteenth season with the help of Sarah Jessica Parker (who will read a selection from Al Hirschfeld's 1951 collection of humorous anecdotes, "Show Business Is No Business"), Harris Yulin (presenting Sam Shepard's "Great Dream of Heaven"), and John Shea (D. H. Lawrence's "The Horse Dealer's Daughter"). (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ♦ Jan. 15 at 7: Paul Collins, the editor of the Collins Library series of reissued, formerly out-of-print obscurities, joins the writers Joel Rose, David Carlyon, Michelle Stacey, and Paul Lafarge for an evening of readings from forgotten literature. (Housing Works Used Book Café, 126 Crosby St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Jan. 15 at 8: The poets Wanda Phipps and Pedro Pietri read from their work. (Poetry Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.)

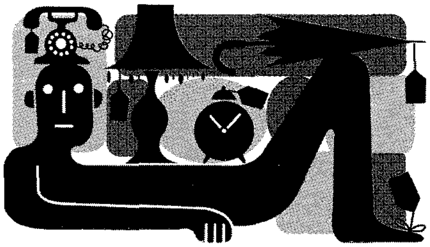
TALKS
Jan. 15 at 7: The poet Eamon Grennan talks about Chaucer. (Poets House, 72 Spring St., second floor. 431-7920.) ♦ Jan. 17 at 3: The folk-art collector Ralph Esmerian discusses choosing and caring for Americana. (The American Antiques Show, Metropolitan Pavilion, 125 W. 18th St. For more information, call 977-7170, ext. 312.) ♦ Jan. 18 at 3: George Boziwick, the head of the American Music Collection at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, interviews the composer, critic, and teacher Arthur Berger. (Bruno Walter Auditorium, 11 Amsterdam Ave., near 65th St. For more information, call 642-0142.) ♦ Jan. 21 at 6:30: The critic and H. L. Mencken biographer Terry Teachout explains why the great curmudgeon of American letters is still relevant. (Celeste Bartos Forum, New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. For more information, call 930-0855.)

WALK
Jan. 20 at 11: John Reddick, the president of a nonprofit public-space advocacy group called the Cityscape Institute, leads a tour of Harlem's Martin Luther King, Jr., Boulevard. For more information, call 935-3960.

BOOK CURRENTS

Buy and Buy

In ancient Rome, artisans sold luxury goods at their clients' homes; during the seventies, Bloomingdale's deliberately confused its customers with disorganized merchandise displays. "For better and worse, it is impossible today to imagine a world without shopping," Thomas Hine argues in **I WANT THAT!** (HarperCollins). Hine coins the term "buyosphere" to describe the spaces in which we acquire, and he traces the history of shopping back to the quest of Jason who, with the help of the Argonauts, was "trying to get his hands on a valuable object"—the Golden Fleece. "For the hero (as for some shoppers) the struggle of finding is more important than the actual getting," he explains. In these strapped times, every shopper can be a hero. "Indeed," Hine writes, "our economic health depends on shoppers' ceaseless lust for the inessential."



That "ceaseless lust" may explain the success behind John D. Freyer's singular experiment, which he chronicles in the book **ALL MY LIFE FOR SALE** (Bloomsbury). Freyer, who describes himself as "the type of person who holds on to things," made almost five thousand dollars by selling all the possessions in his Iowa City home on eBay. He began with his toaster (final price: $11.50) and then moved on to an Iowa City phone book, 1999-2000 ($1.25), a copy of the novel "Infinite Jest," one-eighth read ($7.50), a Jesus night-light ($8), and his sideburns ($19.50). Though the book is a catalogue, it is also an autobiography of how objects have defined Freyer's life. He almost took up smoking because a kidney-shaped ashtray ($8) was "so damn cool," and he felt a deep anger when his father returned a handmade book ($22.50) Freyer had constructed out of ads from old *Life* magazines.

—*Marshall Heyman*

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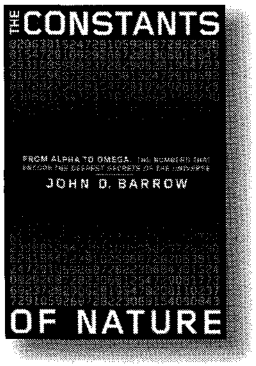
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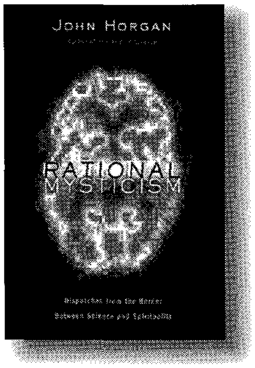
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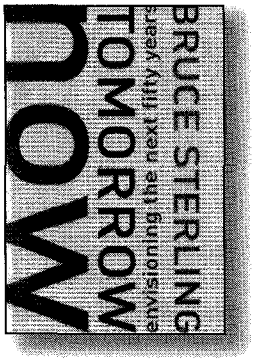
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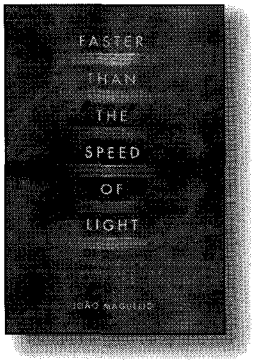
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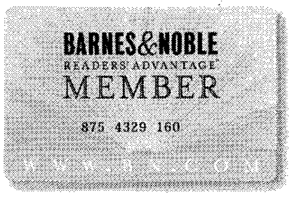
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MOVIES OPENING

CITY OF GOD
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Jan. 17. (Angelika Film Center.)

DIVINE INTERVENTION
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Jan. 17. (Angelika Film Center.)

A GUY THING
Jason Lee plays a bachelor who gets mixed up with the cousin (Julia Stiles) of his fiancée (Selma Blair), in a comedy directed by Chris Koch ("Snow Day"). Opening Jan. 17.

HIDDEN WARS OF DESERT STORM
John Hurt narrates this documentary exposé of the Gulf War. Opening Jan. 17. (Anthology Film Archives.)

KANGAROO JACK
A comedy in which two friends (Jerry O'Connell and Anthony Anderson) deliver some Mob cash to Australia, where they run afoul of a marsupial. Opening Jan. 17.

KIRA'S REASON—A LOVE STORY
Ole Christian Madsen directed this Dogme '95 film about a woman (Stine Stengade) returning to her husband and children after a stay in a psychiatric institution. In Danish. Opening Jan. 17. (Quad Cinema.)

NATIONAL SECURITY
A comedy with Steve Zahn and Martin Lawrence as L.A.P.D. rejects who uncover a smuggling ring. Directed by Dennis Dugan ("Big Daddy"). Opening Jan. 17.

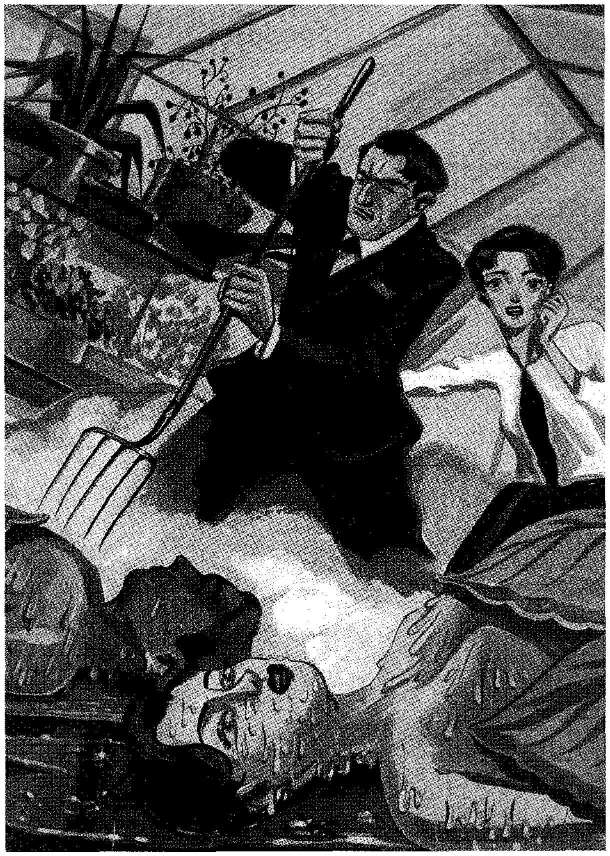
P.S. YOUR CAT IS DEAD!
An adaptation of James Kirkwood's play about a struggling actor who captures and interrogates a burglar. Steve Guttenberg directed, and he also stars. Opening Jan. 17. (Quad Cinema.)

THE SETTLERS
A documentary about Orthodox Jewish women and children living in Hebron, paired with "Close, Closed, Closure," a portrait of a Palestinian family living in the Gaza Strip. Opening Jan. 15. (Film Forum.)

7TH STREET
Josh Pais directed this autobiographical documentary about growing up in Alphabet City. Opening Jan. 17. (Cinema Village.)

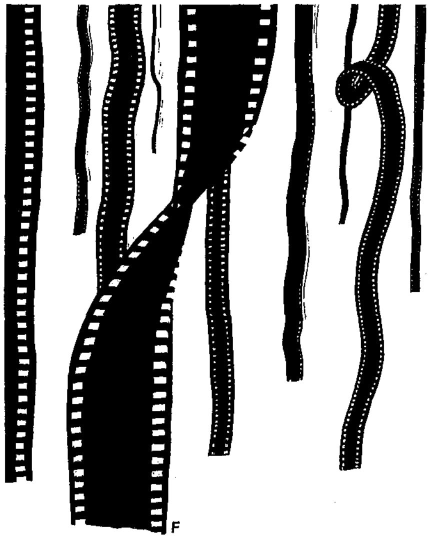
FILM NOTES

ABOUT SCHMIDT
Alexander Payne's last movie, "Election," was unpleasant, timely, and as sharp as a nib. His new movie is unpleasant, indecisive, and about as cheering as a damp fog. Jack Nicholson plays the eponymous Schmidt, who leaves a long career in insurance and slumps into graceless retirement. His wife (June Squibb) dies, whereupon his daughter (Hope Davis) takes over the household; soon enough, the aging male is left alone, and we are left to ponder the mismatch—unresolved by Payne—between Schmidt the early fusspot and Schmidt the emerging slob, with a riot of used food packaging at his feet. After that, the movie takes to the road, like a late, soft aftermath to "Five Easy Pieces." The Nicholson of that film made hard choices, but here he plays to the viewers' cultish worship of Jack the Lad, and even the saddest scenes have flourishes of rumpled clowning. A picture that aimed to celebrate a regular guy winds up endorsing his comic disdain for the stale lives around him. With Dermot Mulroney, Kathy Bates, and a hot tub that has seen it all.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 12/16/02.) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, East 86th Street Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)



At Sunshine Cinema, the midnight film series continues with a new print of "Invasion of the Body Snatchers."

ZOHAR LAZAR



ADAPTATION
The hero of the new experimental comedy by the writer Charlie Kaufman and the director Spike Jonze is Kaufman himself, played by Nicolas Cage. He's signed on to adapt Susan Orlean's "The Orchid Thief," which he calls "great sprawling *New Yorker* stuff"—by which he means it's a screenwriter's nightmare: ruminative and descriptive, but lacking any clear kind of "arc." Cage's Charlie, a malcontent who wears a flannel shirt in Los Angeles, works himself into a fury of self-loathing, and, for about an hour, the movie is a funny, deft metafiction. We see the story Kaufman is trying to write: Orlean (Meryl Streep) tags along with John Laroche (Chris Cooper), a Florida man who was arrested while poaching a rare form of orchid. Unsocialized but erudite, a swamp-bred crank, Laroche fascinates the melancholy Orlean. The performances are all expert, especially Cooper's, but the movie takes a disastrous leap into melodrama at the end, which can be interpreted as either a sellout to Hollywood convention or a savage self-parody of selling out. Either way, it's a mistake.—*David Denby* (12/9/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, and Sunshine Cinema.)

ANTWONE FISHER
"Oprah" for men. Fisher's horrific childhood—he was abandoned by his mother and then sexually molested in his Cleveland foster home—gets the full Hollywood treatment in Denzel Washington's directorial début. The self-congratulatory autobiographical script, written by Fisher, concentrates on his relationship with a psychologist (played by Washington) who provides him with the key to conquering his past. Derek Luke, as the title character, and Joy Bryant, as his love interest, give performances that raise the film above its inspirational message, but just barely. Washington directs in his own image—the movie is sturdy and handsomely made, but lacks grit and complexity.—*Bruce Diones* (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, 62nd & Broadway, and Union Square.)

CATCH ME IF YOU CAN
Leonardo DiCaprio is loose and easy—a movie star again—in Steven Spielberg's charming comedy about a teen-age con man. When his businessman/scam-artist father (Christopher Walken) loses his grip, Frank W. Abagnale (DiCaprio), eager to restore the old guy's glory, slips into deception as a way of life, impersonating, serially, an airline pilot, a doctor, and a lawyer, kiting checks along the way. Agent Hanratty (Tom Hanks) of the F.B.I. pursues Frank with a Javert-like relentlessness, yet becomes fond of the young scoundrel. The movie is really about an amoral boy lucky enough to have two fathers, each with superb qualities. This real-life story (based on Abagnale's autobiography) is set in the sixties, and Spielberg has given it a sleek and carefree look. An expert and touching entertainment.—*D.D.* (12/23 & 30/02) (Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LE CERCLE ROUGE
In this de-luxe piece of heist-film engineering from 1970, the writer-director Jean-Pierre Melville provides a satisfying payoff for the audience, if not the characters—according to the hardboiled karma of the plot, everyone winds up philosophical or dead. Just released ex-con Alain Delon and escaped prisoner Gian-Maria Volonté take turns saving each other's life and then enlist marksman Yves Montand to help them pull off a Paris jewelry-store robbery. Bourvil is the inspector on their trail, and François Périer the well-connected owner of an irresistible gangland night club. Volonté's juicy wildness as a self-proclaimed "amateur" and Montand's blowsy authority as an alcoholic help lubricate the plot; the lizards and insects of Montand's delirium-tremens scene presage "Celebrity Fear Factor." And with the help of the cinematographer Henri Decaë, Melville puts on a virtuoso display of movie-action geometry, from the red circle of chalk Delon uses on a pool cue to the slashing lines he cuts in his blocky American car. In French.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Jan. 15-21.)

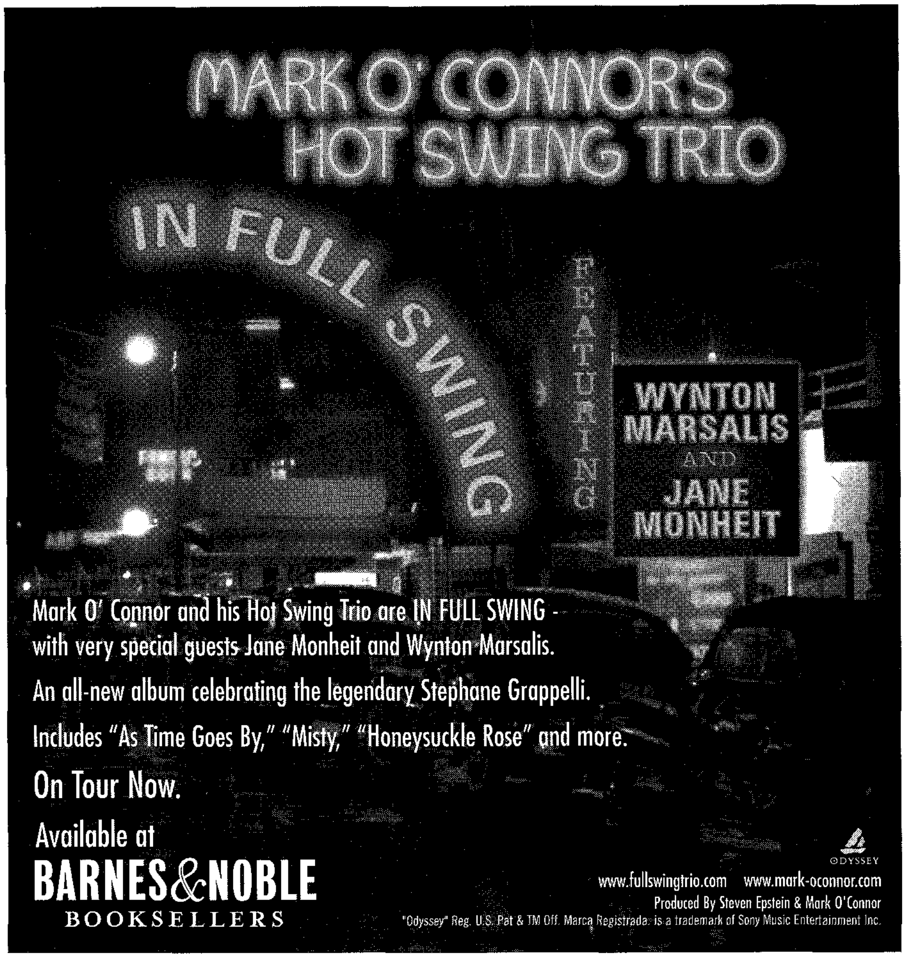
CHICAGO
The time is the nineteen-twenties, but the setting is so stylized, so shamelessly grounded in a hundred other shows and films, that "Chicago" barely qualifies as a period piece; indeed, it merrily jabs at the celebrity-lust of our own era. Catherine Zeta-Jones is Velma Kelly, and Renée Zellweger is Roxie Hart. Each is a man-killer, and each resides in jail, plotting her

defense with the silken legal help of Billy Flynn (Richard Gere). The music and lyrics by Kander and Ebb operate on the old-fashioned principle that every song should be a showstopper, regardless of whether the show should be stopped. The director, Rob Marshall, cuts away furiously during every song, and this chronic wish to glance aside makes us wonder: could the performers not weather the camera's unstinting gaze? The only player to conquer the movie is Zeta-Jones, who gets by on a full tank of unleaded oomph. The film has punch, but it never really conveys the delicious, redeeming sense that life can be lived on the hoof.—*A.L.* (1/6/03) (84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, and Ziegfeld.)

CONFESSIONS OF A DANGEROUS MIND
Just as audiences are recovering from the multi-layered madness of "Adaptation," here comes another Charlie Kaufman script. George Clooney directed, but this project is pure Kaufman: fact and fiction tossed in the blender together, with plenty of formal trickery. The story, or more precisely, the leaping-off point, is the autobiography of Chuck Barris, the producer who invented "The Dating Game," "The Newlywed Game," and "The Gong Show," which he also hosted. Then, there is this small matter of political assassinations: Barris claimed to be a C.I.A. hit man, tapped for various "wet" operations throughout his television career. Sam Rockwell plays Barris as a carnal, slightly crazed man who's also deeply insecure that he'll be remembered as a purveyor of trash. Is this what tipped him into his fantasy life? This nimble and free-spirited film doesn't say; it continually shifts perspective and plays with the mystery. In the end, it's a story of wayward ambition and an object lesson in what people will do when placed in front of a television camera. With Drew Barrymore and Julia Roberts as the duelling women in Barris's life.—*Michael Agger* (Union Square.)

FAR FROM HEAVEN
An immaculate movie from Todd Haynes, the purveyor of "Safe" and "Velvet Goldmine." This project teams him once again with Julianne Moore, who looks set to become the Catherine Deneuve to Haynes's Buñuel. Here she plays—or incarnates, to the last inch of her hemline—a wife and mother, living in Hartford in 1957. All is well, if brittle, until she drops by to see her husband (Dennis Quaid) in his office after hours and finds him entwined with a man. From here on, their lives start to shred and scatter; she herself falls for the gardener (Dennis Haysbert), who is not only black but, to all appearances, perfect. With tact and care, the movie digs into all the subjects that lay concealed below the surface when Max Ophuls and Douglas Sirk were filming their own melodramas in the nineteen-fifties. As an exercise in style, it cannot be faulted, yet there remains something prim in the whole endeavor—we know better than these beleaguered people did, and the movie can hardly help congratulating us, and itself, on that knowledge.—*A.L.* (11/18/02) (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Eastside Playhouse, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

GANGS OF NEW YORK
Daniel Day-Lewis, returning to movies after a spell of shoemaking in Florence, disports himself with royal assurance as the voluble thug William Cutting (Bill the Butcher) in Martin Scorsese's generally unsuccessful epic about nineteenth-century gang life in New York. Wielding knife and cleaver, Day-Lewis does what he can to give this semi-coherent production some theatrical panache, but Scorsese and his screenwriters never succeed in linking together the intimate personal dramas and the endless gang war between the nativist Yankees (i.e., Protestants) and the new waves of Irish immigrants. The movie isn't boring, but it's heavy-spirited, obvious, and grisly, with an emphasis on knives and blood that borders on the fetishistic. With a sullen, stolid Leonardo DiCaprio as a young Irish immigrant eager to avenge the death of his father, Cameron Diaz as a prostitute and pickpocket, Liam Neeson as a fallen Irish leader, and Jim Broadbent as the corrupt political boss William Tweed.—*D.D.* (12/23 & 30/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Cinema 2, Empire



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25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE HOURS

It has to overcome an over-all morbidity, a fractured time sequence, and Philip Glass's intrusive, chiming score, and, amazingly, it does. Stephen Daldry directed this adaptation of Michael Cunningham's prize-winning 1998 novel, from a script by David Hare. They've fashioned a lovely, serious work—as good as any recent "literary" movie—devoted to two themes, the variety of human bonds, especially the bond of love, and the gift that the dying make to the living. Nicole Kidman gives a revelatory performance as Virginia Woolf, both in 1923, at the time of writing "Mrs. Dalloway," and in 1941, when she loaded her coat with stones and walked into a river. Julianne Moore is a depressed Los Angeles housewife in 1951, and Meryl Streep plays a contemporary New York literary editor who hopes to give a party for a poet friend (Ed Harris) dying of AIDS. The widely separated episodes fit together as surely and lightly as dancers in a Balanchine ballet.—*D.D.* (12/23 & 30/02) (42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, and Union Square.)

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

A 1956 B-picture classic. This plain and inexpensive piece of science fiction employs few of the resources of the cinema (to put it mildly), but it has an idea that confirms everyone's suspicions. People are being turned into vegetables—and who can tell the difference? Kevin McCarthy and Dana Wynter, who try to cling to their animality and individuality, seem inexplicably backward to the rest of the townspeople. Some of the best lines of dialogue are voice-overs—the chatter of the dehumanized. Directed by Don Siegel. With Carolyn Jones, Larry Gates, and Sam Peckinpah (who worked on the script) in a few bits.—*Pauline Kael* (Sunshine Cinema; Jan. 17-19.)

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE TWO TOWERS

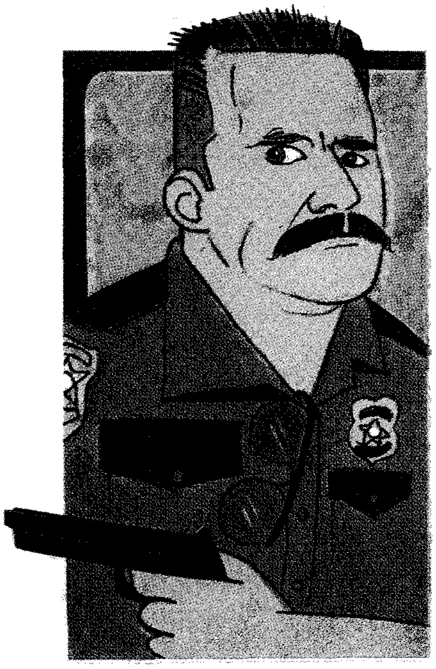
If Peter Jackson's trilogy were to map every detail of the Master's work, the result would be three years long. In the event, he's crunched and tidied Tolkien's second book into an easily digestible three hours. We get flying dragons, a breathless opening sequence in which Gandalf (Ian McKellen) plummets down a belching abyss, and Shadowfax, a flawless white horse who will gallop in from nowhere, though only in slow-motion. Then there is Gollum, as white-skinned and blue-veined as moldering cheese, a character who gives the movie a chance for psychological inquiry—the one thing it doesn't require. One of the restrictions and pleasures of an epic is that it both predates and outwits psychology. In addition, Gollum was forged on a computer, and his creators are so pleased with their baby that they can't help showing him off. This is a pity, and we may have to accept that, for those fooling around with brand-new technologies, the toys are simply too much fun. What allows Jackson to truly animate his pictures, even as they threaten to founder in fantastical gothic, is his knack for the telling gesture. With Orlando Bloom, providing the movie's wildest cheers as the blond-tressed elf Legolas.—*A.L.* (1/6/03) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

MAID IN MANHATTAN

Jennifer Lopez once showed great promise as an actress: her early roles in "Selena" and particularly "Out of Sight" displayed a tough, sexy charisma. In this would-be romantic comedy she plays a New York hotel maid who's mistaken for a wealthy guest and pursued by a Senate candidate, played, rather grudgingly, by Ralph Fiennes. The director Wayne Wang photographs the city as though it were all one big luxury apartment—everything is shiny and well scrubbed—but there's no silkiness in the wooden pairing of Lopez and Fiennes. Lopez wants desperately to be a diva who's all things to all people, but lately she's just a model of mediocrity.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

MORVERN CALLAR

Samantha Morton plays the title character in Lynne Ramsay's dark and sensuous portrait of a young Scottish woman who, after her boyfriend's suicide, embarks on an existential journey, as mesmerizing and baffling to her as it is to the audience. The movie's slow narrative tempo begins to entrance as she travels from a dead-end job to a European holiday (accompanied by her best friend, played with party-animal enthusiasm by Kathleen McDermott). Morton's performance, easily her best, is charismatically impassive. There's a gorgeous strangeness to Ramsay's movie, a distinctive and alluring visual language, and a sound design that keeps the dialogue to a minimum—the film feels like it's floating in ether.—*B.D.* (Cinema Village.)



Steve Zahn in "National Security."

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

NARC

A former undercover cop (Jason Patric) returns to help a bullying detective (Ray Liotta) solve the murder of an old colleague in the writer/director Joe Carnahan's nervy, adrenalized police drama. The lurid storytelling—the movie was partially filmed in Detroit, and the lens seems clogged with gray vapor—is a throwback to the urban action films of the seventies. Patric's cop is taut, repressed, and Liotta, hot as a pistol, gives a defiant, urgent performance that explodes the story out of its B-movie roots.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE PIANIST

Roman Polanski's drama about the survival of a real-life Polish Jew, the pianist Wladyslav Szpilman (Adrien Brody), during the grim days of the Holocaust is a movie that has been perfectly produced. The sense of scale and detail is exact, and the violence is neither exaggerated nor minimized but presented with clear-eyed accuracy. Yet this is not a work of great originality or imagination. Its protagonist lacks depth, and the theme of survival through hiding is, by its very nature, redundant. The playwright Ronald Harwood adapted the 1946 book that Szpilman wrote about his experiences without attempting to open up the hero at all. Is he ashamed, defiant, guilty? Grateful for his luck? We haven't a clue. His survival is an anomaly, a mistake, a joke—and that may be why the story appealed to Polanski. Shot largely in Warsaw.—*D.D.* (1/13/03) (East 86th Street Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Square, and 19th Street East 6.)

THE QUIET AMERICAN

The second adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, and, on the whole, a more successful effort than Joseph Mankiewicz's, of 1958. Michael Caine may lack the defeated nobility that Michael Redgrave brought to the role of the hero—a British journalist named Fowler—but few can beat Caine when it comes to the sad and the seedy. What is more, he squares off beautifully against Brendan Fraser. With his fine if bumbling manners, and the earnest thickness of his spectacles, Fraser is ideal as Pyle, the young do-gooder who, almost despite himself, winds up doing harm. The two men share a love for a young Vietnamese woman (Do Hai Yen), and the director, Phillip Noyce, manages not to whack us too hard with the symbolic weight of their rivalry. Greene fans, a prickly bunch at the best of times, will pick holes in the movie, but Christopher Doyle's camera, slithering through the rooms and battlegrounds of an alluring land, takes us as close as we could wish to the heart of the matter.—*A.L.* (11/25/02) (Lincoln Square and Village Theatre VII.)

RABBIT-PROOF FENCE

In 1931, three Aboriginal girls fled a state-run native settlement in Western Australia and walked more than twelve hundred miles to their home village. The director Phillip Noyce presents their journey in a straightforward way, giving patient attention to the desolate landscape and the almost wordless resolve of the girls. The movie only hints at the cruelties inflicted on the Aborigines, but the hints are enough. A heartbreaking, elemental film.—*M.A.* (Kew Gardens Cinema, Paris, and Sunshine Cinema.)

RUSSIAN ARK

A guide to the treasures of the Hermitage, a rueful glance down the vistas of Russian history, or a show of technical prowess: take your pick. Alexander Sokurov, the creator of "Mother and Son," proves that his singular method—at once earthy and transcendent—is gaining strength and width. The new film unwinds in one take, lasting ninety-six minutes, and by some miracle we grow happily accustomed to its rhythm, like children held rapt by a bedtime story. The camera glides through galleries as if it were the eye of an invisible visitor; ahead is a black-coated stranger, who accosts passers-by and clucks tenderly, if critically, over the art. Sokurov has made not a documentary, however careful his inspection of painted surfaces, but a collection of small, sorrowful dramas—wait for the imperial children, or the blind woman caressing a marble sculpture. The effect is impenetrable, yet the film is blessed with clarity; maybe, if you spend that much time among Old Masters, they start to rub off on you. In Russian.—*A.L.* (12/16/02) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

SPIRITED AWAY

In his native Japan, the animator-director Hayao Miyazaki is considered a national treasure, and this movie, which he came out of retirement to complete, recently surpassed "Titanic" as that country's highest-grossing picture. It's an amazing work, filled with a visual intelligence that's meticulously composed and obscenely clever. Miyazaki's playful aesthetic is like a Japanese word that can't be adequately translated, best approximated as part Spielberg, part Dr. Seuss. Some people may be put off at first by a film that is essentially a cartoon about a fearful ten-year-old girl. But as the hero, Chihiro, sees her parents turned into swine and flees into an alternate world filled with the creatures of Japanese mythology and of Miyazaki's own invention, any distracting sense of childishness falls away. Left to savor are virtuoso touches, like a flock of birds that becomes useless paper, a train that glides along the surface of a lake, and one of the great villains of all time, Yubaba, who looks like a bobble-headed grandmother on speed.—*M.A.* (Empire 25 and The Screening Room.)

TALK TO HER

In Pedro Almodóvar's odd but touching romantic drama, two very different men are drawn together by a common task: taking care of women who have fallen into a coma. Benigno (Javier Cámara), a shy, seemingly asexual young male nurse, looks after Alicia (Leonor Watling), a beautiful ballet dancer. Marco (Darío Grandinetti), a fortyish Argentine writer, becomes the lover of a fierce, long-waisted female bullfighter (Rosario Flores). After she is gored in the ring, she never speaks again. Both love affairs are touched by fantasy. Almodóvar's point appears to be that you can't have love without fable—that every love affair is an improbable narrative wrung from non-being and loneliness. The movie is shot in a new, subdued style for the director: past and present flow together, and everything seems touched with a melancholy magic. Two ballets by the choreographer Pina Bausch are integral to the film's themes. In Spanish.—*D.D.* (11/25/02) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Sunshine Cinema.)

25TH HOUR
A thirtyish drug dealer (Edward Norton) who is too smart for his situation gets pinched and sentenced to seven years in prison. His imminent departure produces a crisis in the lives of his best friends, a cynical Wall Street trader (Barry Pepper) and a schlubby private-school teacher (Philip Seymour Hoffman). The movie might be described as a turbulent elegy for the burnt-out hopes of a generation. There's a thriller plot buried in the material, but it's done half-heartedly. The glory of the movie is its talk—the profane New York verve of the three men, suffused with a post-September 11th bitterness. David Benioff adapted his own novel, and Spike Lee directed. Brian Cox plays the hero's father, and Rosario Dawson his girlfriend.—*D.D.* (1/13/03) (Battery Park 16, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

ALSO PLAYING

BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE (10/28/02)
Sunshine Cinema and Sutton 1 and 2.

DRUMLINE
Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.

FRIDA (11/11/02)
Angelika Film Center and East 86th Street Cinemas.

MAX
Angelika Film Center.

NICHOLAS NICKLEBY
Angelika Film Center, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kew Gardens Cinema, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

RIVERS AND TIDES: ANDY GOLDSWORTHY WORKING WITH TIME
Film Forum.

SECRETARY (9/23/02)
Quad Cinema.

THE SON
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kew Gardens Cinema, 81-05 Lefferts Blvd., Queens (718-441-9835).
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Twin, Broadway at 99th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Jan. 26: A George A. Romero retrospective. Jan. 18 at noon: Short works (1962-75). ♦ Jan. 18 at 2: "The Crazies" (1973). ♦ Jan. 18 at 4: "Jack's Wife" (1973). ♦ Jan. 19 at 1:30: "Knightriders" (1981). ♦ Jan. 19 at 4:30: "Bruiser" (2000). ♦ Repertory nights. Jan. 18-19 at 6:30: "Shock Corridor" (1963, Samuel Fuller).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Jan. 15-21 at 1:20, 4, 7, and 9:35: "Le Cercle Rouge" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—A celebration of the cinematographer Raoul Coutard. Jan. 21 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Max My Love" (1986, Nagisa Oshima; in French and English).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (777-4900)—Through Jan. 30: "*Positif* Champions: Fifty Years of Cinema," a celebration of the French film monthly. Jan. 16 at 2: "The Travelling Players" (1974-75, Theo Angelopoulos; in Greek). ♦ Jan. 16 at 7:30 and Jan. 18 at 3: "Mafioso" (1962, Alberto Lattuada; in Italian). ♦ Jan. 17 at 2: "The Piano" (1993, Jane Campion). ♦ Jan. 17 at 4:15 and Jan. 18 at 1: "Three Colors: Red" (1994, Krzysztof Kieslowski; in French). ♦ Jan. 18 at 5:30: "The Horror of Dracula" (1958, Terence Fisher). ♦ Jan. 19 at 1: "Sleuth" (1973, Joseph L. Mankiewicz). ♦ Jan. 19 at 3:45: "Close-Up" (1990, Abbas Kiarostami; in Farsi). ♦ Jan. 19 at 6: "In the Realm of the Senses" (1976, Nagisa Oshima; in Japanese). ♦ Jan. 20 at 6: "Ed Wood" (1994, Tim Burton). ♦ Jan. 20 at 8:30: "Pulp Fiction" (1994, Quentin Tarantino). ♦ Special event. Jan. 17 at 6:15: The animator R. O. Blechman presents his work.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (358-0573)—Midnight movies. Jan. 17-19: "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" (†).

THALIA THEATRE
2537 Broadway, at 95th St. (864-5400)—Through April 6: "New Voices Since the Eighties." Jan. 18 at 1 and 6:30: "Black Cat, White Cat" (1998, Emir Kusturica; in German, Romany, and Serbo-Croatian). ♦ Jan. 18 at 3:30 and 9: "Time of the Gypsies" (1989, Kusturica; in Romany and Serbo-Croatian). ♦ Jan. 19 at 2 and 6: "Fallen Angels" (1995, Wong Kar-wai; in Cantonese). ♦ Jan. 19 at 3:45 and 7:45: "Happy Together" (1997, Wong; in Cantonese, Mandarin, and Spanish).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Through Jan. 23: The New York Jewish Film Festival. ♦ Jan. 17-18: "Dance on Camera 2003" (see Dance listings).

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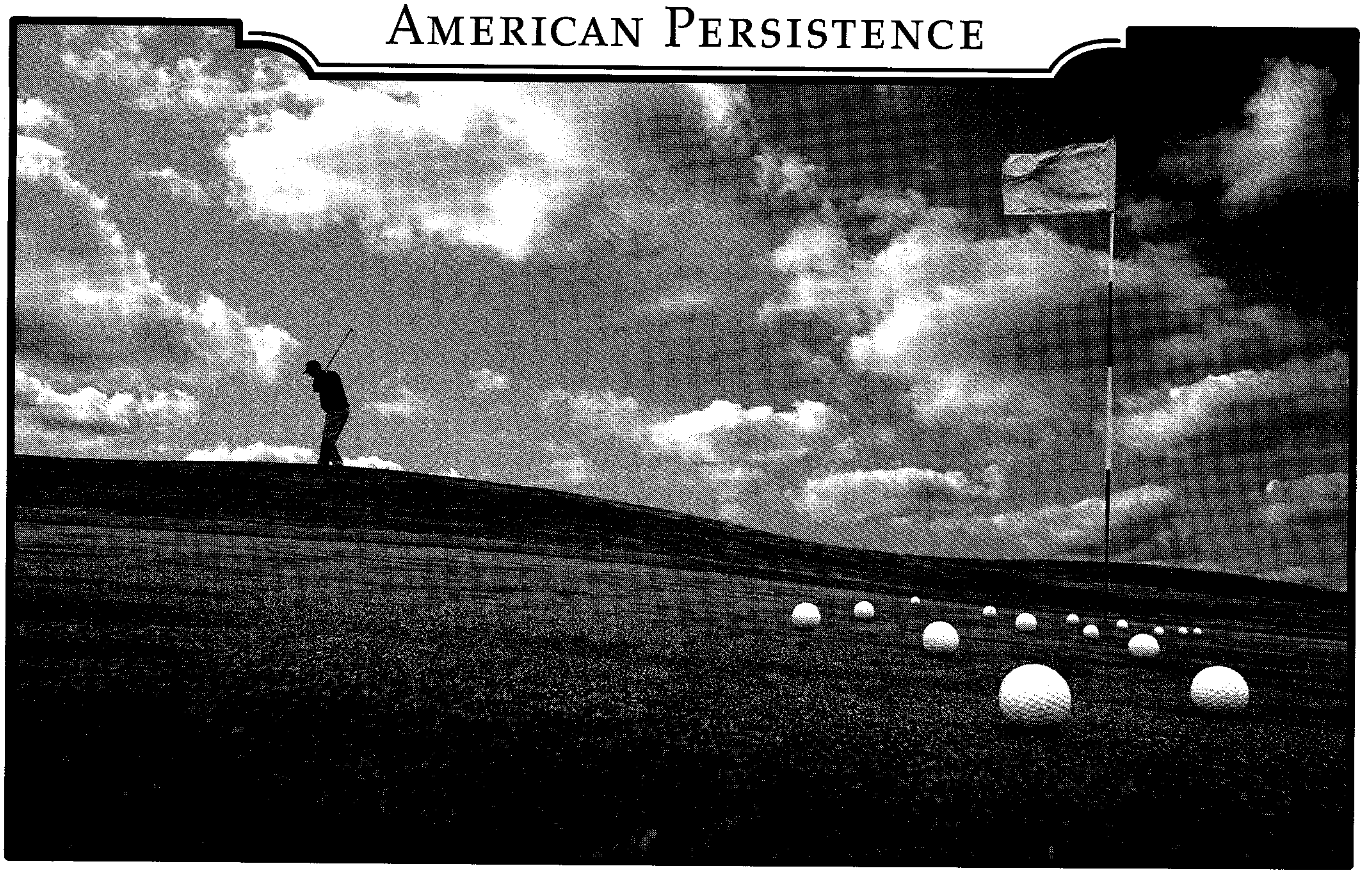

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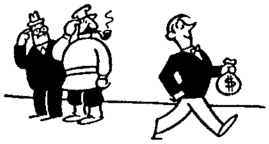


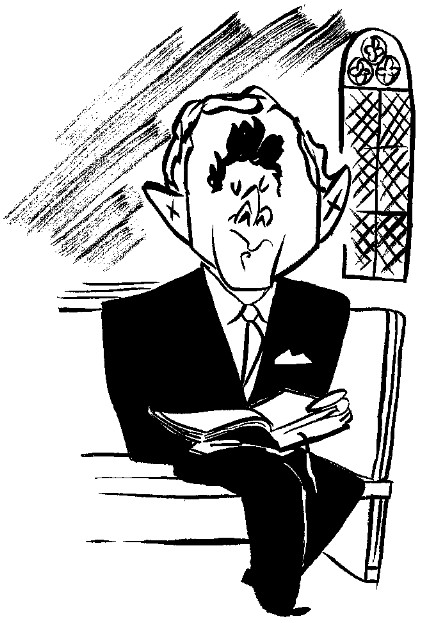
The current Administration likes its initiatives faith-based, and there has never been much secret about which faith constitutes the base. "Christ," Governor George W. Bush replied during a 1999 primary debate, when asked to name his favorite political philosopher. In the ambit of Bush the President, piety is next to godliness. According to a former Bush staffer, Evangelical Christianity is the "predominant creed" at the White House, and a tardy arrival is apt to be greeted with the reproach "Missed you at Bible study."

After the unveiling last Tuesday of Bush's "economic stimulus package," though, one has to wonder, and not for the first time, just which Bible these good people have been studying. It must be some sort of Heavily Revised Nonstandard Version, whose verses are familiar yet subtly different:

> He that hath pity upon the rich lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will pay him again. (Proverbs 19:17)
>
> Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the rich, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. (Matthew 19:21)
>
> For the love of money is the root of all good. (I Timothy 6:10)

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

The stimulus plan, which the President outlined in a speech to an audience of friendlies at the Economic Club of Chicago, exercises what the Pope might call, if the Pope were a Bush-style Evangelical instead of a Catholic, a preferential option for the rich. It is fully consistent with the economic and fiscal policies that the Administration has pursued from the beginning, which have combined small, cheap, and increasingly feeble gestures toward the bottom four-fifths of the income scale with enormous reductions in the taxes paid by the top tenth, and, especially, by the couple of hundred thousand families with annual incomes greater than a million dollars. Most of the claimed ten-year cost of the new plan—$364 billion out of $674 billion (the real cost is closer to $900 billion, because of interest payments on a higher public debt)—is accounted for by a proposal to make stock dividends tax-free. According to Citizens for Tax Justice, whose computations are generally regarded as reliable, half the cash will flow to the richest one per cent of taxpayers. Another quarter of the benefits will go to the rest of the top five per cent. Wealthy rentiers will thus be freed from the indignity of having to pay ordinary income tax on their dividend income, quite as if it were money that had been earned by the sweat of their brow—as if it were a coal miner's wages or a schoolteacher's salary. Much of the rest of Bush's plan consists of speeding up rate reductions from his 2001 tax cut, which are also overwhelmingly skewed in favor of the affluent.



"These tax reductions will bring real and immediate benefits to middle-income Americans," Bush said in Chicago. "Ninety-two million Americans will keep an average of $1,083 more of their own money." The first of these claims, as the *Financial Times* editorialized the day after the speech, is "obviously bogus." The second is true, but only in the sense that it is also true that if Bill Gates happened to drop by a homeless shelter where a couple of nuns were serving soup to sixty down-and-outers dressed in rags, the average person in the room would have a net worth of a billion dollars. Average, yes; typical, no. A typical taxpayer—one right smack in the middle of the income range—will get a couple of hundred dollars. And a worker in the bottom twenty per cent will get next to nothing—at most, a dime or a quarter a week.

The Bloomberg financial news service performed the useful exercise of calculating what this latest Bush package would deliver to Bush himself. If his income this year is unchanged, he could get a windfall of as much as $44,500. Not bad—more, in fact, than the total income, before taxes, of a substantial majority of American families. Dick Cheney does even better. His tax break comes to $327,000—more than the before-tax income of ninety-eight per cent of his fellow-citizens. At the Presidential and Vice-Presidential level, it seems, there is no conflict of interest between public policy and private gain. The two are in perfect harmony.

The question naturally arises: Have these people no shame? Well, yes, they have a little. They don't say outright that they regard giving money to the rich as a worthy end in itself. They say that their goal is to create jobs. That's what Bush said in his speech, not once but two dozen times. There are better ways to do this. The various Democratic proposals for smaller, faster, temporary tax cuts aimed at people who actually need money would be one such way. A payroll-tax holiday would be better still, because the payroll tax is a direct tax on jobs and therefore on job creation. Even better would be for the government to buy things that people need, that are social goods, and that markets cannot provide unassisted—things like schools, cops, and hospitals. To provide economic stimulus, after all, the money has to be spent; and the surest way to guarantee that it will be spent is to spend it.

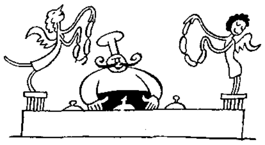
The notion that the elimination of income tax on dividends has something to do with stimulus is, to quote the *Financial Times* again, "dishonest and seems to be designed to prevent a proper discussion of the long-term fiscal costs and benefits." The proposal makes sense only as part of the Administration's apparently iron determination to shift the tax burden downward. In that connection, here's a suggested text for the next meeting of the White House Bible-study group. The real thing this time, from the King James version, not the Prince George one:

> And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.
>
> And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.
>
> And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury:
>
> For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living. (Mark 12:41-44)

Thus endeth the lesson, and thus might beginneth an enlightening discussion of the virtues of progressive taxation.

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

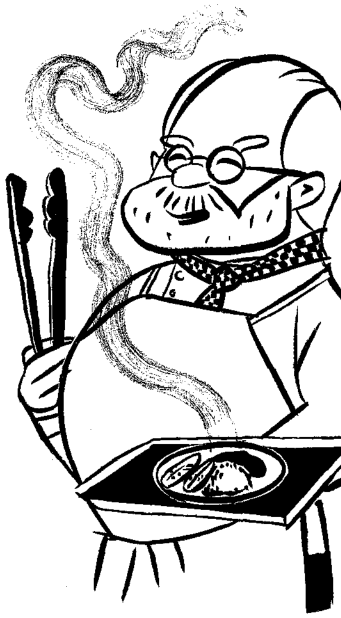
LUNCH PERIOD
NOTHING BUT THE BEST



No one is saying that the hiring of Chef Bobo by the Calhoun School, on the Upper West Side, was an intentionally provocative gesture, but clearly it puts the onus on Manhattan's other private schools to respond. Would you prefer that your child attend a school with a cafeteria or one with a dining room served by a graduate of the French Culinary Institute? Who, by the way, is also Derek Jeter's personal chef.

How does that happen? About a year ago, Jeter is having difficulty enjoying his food in restaurants. Nearly everyone who sees him feels entitled to go up and talk to him. Not that he complains. He's not a complainer—"A gentleman" is what he is, according to Chef Bobo, whose name is Robert Surles (the declension is Robert, Bob, Bobo)—but Jeter happens to mention to his agent how he always sits there, nailed to his seat, being polite to one stranger after another, while his food gets cold, the meal takes hours, and he gets home late, having had not much pleasure and a wagonload of aggravation. He can't cook—never learned how—with the result that he's not eating. The solution he comes up with is to drive from the Stadium to a fast-food place, order at the drive-through window, and have dinner in his car. So now he's eating badly. The agent knows Surles, who teaches volume cooking at the French Culinary Institute, in SoHo. The agent's idea is that he will give Jeter a present of a chef for a month, then hope that Jeter keeps the chef around after that. Surles follows the Yankees, so he's interested. He meets Jeter at his apartment for an interview, and they get along. Jeter is gracious and unassuming—exactly the qualities that get him into situations in restaurants, but never mind. Surles asks Jeter what he has for him to cook with. Jeter opens every cabinet in the kitchen. They're all empty. Somewhat sheepishly, he says, "Nothing." The pantry has cases of a sports drink, and the refrigerator has the sports drink cold. "I do have a blender, though," Jeter says. Surles gets him eating fish, which he hasn't done since he was twelve and got sick on a piece of it, and on the occasions when Surles can't be there to serve a meal he leaves one, along with instructions about how to reheat it. He also fills the freezer with French toast, which Jeter especially likes.

In the meantime, the Calhoun School decides that its students need to eat better. They're always tired, and are constantly eating cookies and candy and putting ketchup on everything to make it taste like something, and they arrive home on the downside of a sugar rush. The school lets its caterer go—schools in the city tend to use institutional caterers—and puts together a committee, which finds Surles.

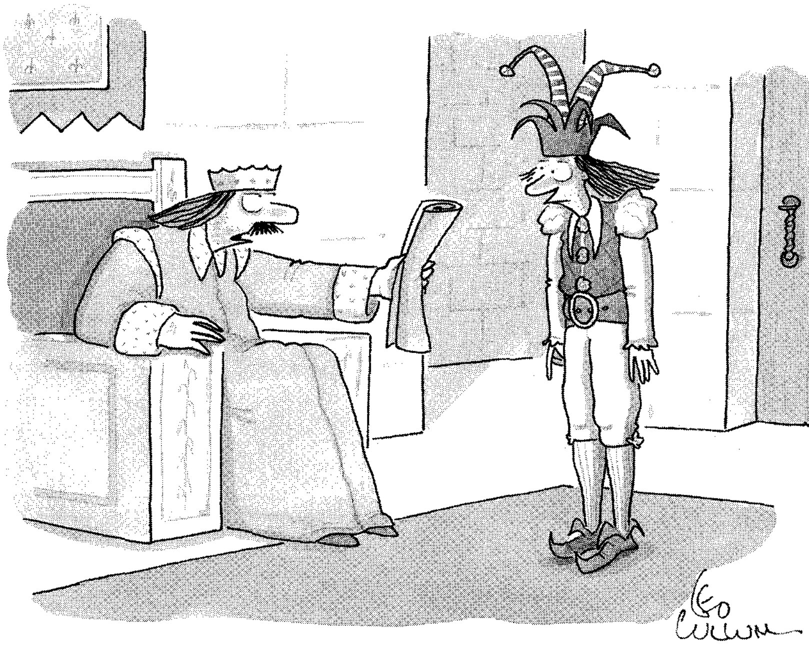


Chef Bobo

Surles was born in Texas but grew up in New Orleans. (He is also the chef of the Krewe of Orpheus, the Mardi Gras club begun in 1993 by Harry Connick, Jr.) He is sixty. He has white hair and a white beard, a high forehead, and a soft and obscurely Southern accent. When he arrived at Calhoun, he hired Chris Canty, who had worked at Bouley Bakery making pastry, to oversee the desserts, and he also hired three of his F.C.I. students. He took away the ketchup. When the kids asked for it, he told them that he didn’t believe in it. The kids didn’t like that, but they didn’t really know how to respond. He insisted that they eat a piece of fruit before having, say, a bagel. He believes that learning how to eat is a life skill. Now every day there’s a sandwich menu, a salad bar, a soup, an entrée, a starch, and a vegetable. The kids drink milk or juice or iced tea. To sweeten the tea, Chef Bobo makes a clear syrup of mint, sugar, and ginger. He used to put it out on the table, but the smaller kids were drinking it straight, so he had to ration it.

Surles has the summers off, and this summer he’ll work again for Jeter, who lives in Florida during the off season. Surles usually arrives at the school around five-thirty in the morning. “It’s my own kitchen,” he says, “and I like to wake up my kitchen.” He sends lots of recipes home, because kids want their parents to serve them the same food they get at school. One afternoon a week, he runs a cooking class for the older kids. For Christmas, one of the students asked his parents for a Cuisinart.

—*Alec Wilkinson*



“Take this declaration of war and punch it up.”

• •

RAINY DAY DEPT.
SOLD SEPARATELY

Sid Sackson, in his 1975 book “Beyond Tic Tac Toe,” wrote, “Games mean many things to many people; to me, they are an art form of great potential beauty.” If so, Sackson, who died late last year, at the age of eighty-two, was a prodigious and versatile master. He designed dozens of ingenious strategy games—Acquire, Can’t Stop, Focus—and clever variations on poker, dominoes, and other classics.

Then, there was Sackson’s collection, reputed to be the world’s largest. “From the first year we were married, 1941, he had all of the boards,” Bernice Sackson, a diminutive eighty-year-old with reddish-brown hair, said the other day at her house in the north Bronx. “In 1970, he stopped working as a civil engineer and began collecting in earnest.” He maintained a rigorous regimen of toy fairs, garage sales, and review-copy requests. “Scarsdale church tag sales, those were the best,” she said.

The collection overtook the house. As Bernice walked from the ground-floor living room, where an urn containing her husband’s ashes sits beside three lifetime-achievement statuettes from toy-and-game associations, to the second-floor parlor, she explained, “Our daughter used this room for dating for a little while. But in ’72 she got married, and from that time on it was for Sid.” So were a first-floor study, the basement, the garage, the upstairs kitchen, and several bedrooms.

Sackson enjoyed what he acquired; he and Bernice entertained regularly, and all game-related activity was chronicled in leather-bound diaries. (June 4, 1977: “Played The Winning Ticket with the Supersteins. They were quite enthusiastic with it.”) He also saw his holdings—although they were never inventoried, fifteen thousand items wouldn’t be a bad guess—as a research opportunity. “His big dream was to have a game museum,” Bernice said. “He was hoping to have a college acquire the collection, and he would take care of it.” Many institutions turned him down, however. “They would always say the same thing: ‘Where did you get your degree?’ And he didn’t have a doctorate.”

About a decade ago, Sackson’s diary entries became erratic and his command of rules began to unravel—indications of Alzheimer’s. “Around 1999, he couldn’t recognize his own games anymore,” Bernice said. With Sackson in a nursing home, his two children realized that they might have to sell the collection. It was a burden to Bernice and, in the opinion of the couple’s daughter, Dale Friedman, a potential fire hazard. Friedman admits that she is “not a game person,” explaining that she was somewhat put off by her father’s passion: “He would be so hyper—about how you should count every piece, and how you should make sure you didn’t have dirty hands—that it took some of the fun out of it.” Still, she and her brother tried to realize Sackson’s vision. “I contacted a lot of people who said, ‘We’d take the top five hundred,’ ” Friedman said. “I said, ‘That’s not going to help us.’ ”

The family also turned to auction houses. Sotheby’s wasn’t interested, but Friedman found an auctioneer in New Jersey who agreed to handle the sale. News of the auction prompted laments from connoisseurs and Sid Sackson fans—one game lover called the sale “a tragedy for game historians”—but none had the means to save the collection.

The auction, held in Keyport, New Jersey, about a week after Sackson died, was standing room only. Bruce White-hill, a collector and lay historian who calls himself the Big Game Hunter, drove in from Rhode Island; others came from California and England. Some games were sold individually, but most went in large lots. Those who asked got their purchases rubber-stamped “From the Personal Collection of Sid Sackson”; hundreds of these have since surfaced on eBay.

Bernice stayed home, but she'll have a second chance in the spring; the auction house couldn't accommodate all of Sackson's games at once, and left some in her basement. “Be careful,” she said, leading the way downstairs, where thousands of dusty boxes on gray metal shelves—copies of Mazeroni, Sod Buster, Tuba-Ruba, and Fortran (“Input: Reason; Output: Pleasure”)—await new owners.

—*Blake Eskin*

DEPT. OF SUPER SLO-MO

NO FLAG ON THE PLAY

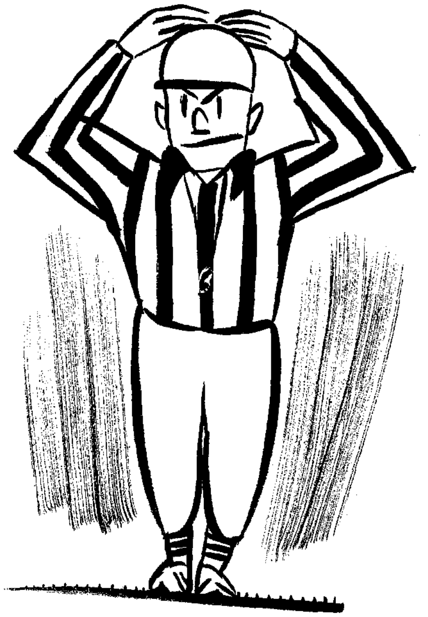
Stanley Fish, the Milton scholar, critical provocateur, and dean at the University of Illinois-Chicago, sometimes tells an old story about the legendary major-league umpire Bill Klem. He uses it to illustrate a point about postmodernist criticism, but it is also applicable to overlooked instances of pass interference in close football games. “Klem's behind the plate,” Fish said last week. “The pitcher winds up, throws the ball. The pitch comes. The batter doesn't swing. Klem for an instant says nothing. The batter turns around and says, ‘O.K., so what was it, a ball or a strike?’ And Klem says, ‘Sonny, it ain't nothing 'til I call it.’ What the batter is assuming is that balls and strikes are facts in the world and that the umpire's job is to accurately say which one each pitch is. But in fact balls and strikes come into being only on the call of an umpire.”

Fish's—and Klem's—view of the metaphysics of the strike zone may be of some use to fans of the New York Giants who believe that their team got jobbed in its bewildering playoff loss to the San Francisco 49ers the other day. When the referees, on the game's last, desperate play, neglected to call a pass-interference penalty that would have given the Giants another attempt at a winning kick, and when the National Football League officially acknowledged, the next afternoon, that the refs had blown it, many thoughtful fans had the presence of mind to say, “The Giants deserved it, anyway.” They tackled poorly. They played tentatively. They retaliated unnecessarily. They blew a twenty-four-point lead. Earlier, when that lead seemed insurmountable, they had behaved badly: they taunted, gloated, and preened. Above all, by botching two field-goal attempts in the final three minutes they loused up the kicking game, which in some precincts is considered the key to winning at football (along with the running game, the passing game, the turnover ratio, the third-down-conversion rate, the battle of wits, the war in the trenches, and the coin toss). So perhaps the non-call was, as the Germans might say, *Gottes Strafe:* God's punishment. Or, as the 49ers' head coach, Steve Mariucci, remarked dryly, “Bummer.”

But many fans do not possess presence of mind. They have the opposite of it, whatever that is—especially when they have been fed a Dealey Plaza diet of damning replays on TV. They believe that the rules are the rules (at least, when those rules favor them). In San Francisco, the rules had been improperly enforced. Therefore, these fans clamored, there should be a do-over. The Giants and the Niners should reconvene to play that one last down—if not the entire game.

It was a daring notion, and not just because there was virtually no precedent for it (with the exception, of course, of the Pine-Tar Incident—see Brett v. Baseball, 1983). A do-over would violate one of the sacred precepts of sports: what the ref says goes, even if he's nuts, drunk, or just plain wrong. When calls go bad, athletes and coaches have little recourse, and fans have even less: their only means of registering a grievance is to shout at the TV or beat someone up. (Or they can cry lawsuit, as Anthony Impreveduto, a New Jersey assemblyman, did last week.)

“The controversy over the Giants game is an example of a very old debate that is actually at the heart of American law and politics: the debate between proceduralism and what we might call substance,” Fish said. “Those people who are inclined toward the substantive say that you shouldn't allow a formal and mechanical rule to decide something when there's good substantive evidence available in the other direction.” Sports, though, aspires to be rigorously proceduralistic. If pass interference was not called, there was no pass interference, even if the N.F.L. itself says, a day later, that there was.



“Another example might be the 2000 election,” Fish said. “A lot of people still believe that the election was really won by Al Gore, that George Bush was declared the winner only by the Supreme Court. But, of course, it was the Supreme Court that had the institutional authority to make the decision it did.

“The danger of do-overism,” he went on, “is that there's no logical end to it. It's always possible to bring in relevant information that would perhaps have influenced someone's decision in another direction. This is not a trivial issue.”

No one said that it was.

—*Nick Paumgarten*

CLOSING TIME

CIAO RADICCHIO

Sal and Tim stood by the doors of Balducci's last Tuesday night, keeping a watchful eye on the premises. The store was nearly empty, the lights dimmed, the shelves disordered, amid an air of melancholy and mismanagement. After fifty-four years of selling perfect produce and overpriced provender to generations of West Villagers, Balducci's, at the corner of Ninth Street and Sixth Avenue, was closing its doors forever that night, without warning to customers, staff, or landlord. (The Balducci's on the Upper West Side will remain open.) Sal and Tim—thick-shouldered, mustachioed, wearing leather jackets—said that they had been brought in for "loss prevention": to make sure that a shocked and disgruntled employee didn't damage property or make off with a rack of lamb.

"We're here as a comfort for everybody," Tim said.

"That's all," Sal said.

The portrait of Louis and Maria Balducci, the founders, that hung by the front door was taken down some time ago, employees say, after the store was sold to Sutton Place Gourmet, of Bethesda, Maryland, in 1999. Now the display cases in the meat department were scratched and clouded. The French crêpes were crusted with ice, and a lone box of clementines was beginning to rot. A reporter from the *Post* patrolled the produce section for quotes, and a woman from the *News* was over in dairy. Photographers shot pictures of customers holding vine-ripened tomatoes or boxes of biscotti, their faces fixed in expressions of mourning.

As nine o'clock, closing time, neared, the customers were outnumbered by Sal and Tim and the rest of the loss-prevention crew. At ten to nine, a young woman rushed in and started to fill a shopping basket with fancy foods: bottled grape leaves, orange-blossom water, a nine-dollar tube of pesto. She approached the checkout counter and was told that it was Balducci's last night. She looked around at the deserted registers.

"I'm the last customer?" she asked.

She said that her name was Lola. She is a painter in her early twenties, and she was making a gift basket for the father of her ex-boyfriend, who had left her to move to Los Angeles. "He broke my heart," she said as she handed the cashier a round of Camembert. After the breakup, she'd spent New Year's with the ex-boyfriend's father, in upstate New York, where he couldn't get delicacies like the ones at Balducci's. She wanted to thank him, she said, as the last items passed over the scanner: snail shells, truffle oil, aged balsamic vinegar, and, finally, Forbidden Rice.

"Two hundred and eighty-six fifty-seven," the cashier said.

"You know what is really good at Balducci's?" Lola said, handing over a credit card. "The croquettes. They don't stick to the top of your mouth."

It was closing time. There were no signs of disgruntlement. A clerk swept the floor. The checkout girls helped Lola pack up her gift basket, as she explained that she hadn't meant to come to Balducci's that evening. She had called Dean & DeLuca, in SoHo, to see if it was open, but the operator had put her on hold, so she decided to just run over to Balducci's. (Word is that Dean & DeLuca may take over the Balducci's space.)

"We're closing the doors now," Tim said.

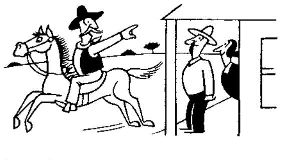
"Move it along," said Sal.

"Hey, what about him?" Lola said, pointing to a man in a black parka at the next register, who was paying for a hunk of Parmesan. "*He's* the last customer."

The man didn't hear her. He had already rushed out the door, oblivious.

—*Guy Lawson*

O PIONEERS DEPT.
YEE HAW



The walls of Axel Alonso's office at Marvel Comics are covered with illustrations, but the one that first catches the eye is a cover for the upcoming relaunch of "Rawhide Kid." The Kid, who débuted in 1955 but went dormant in 1979, is looking as fancy as ever, handsome as all get-out, his white Stetson concealing a shock of red hair, his blue chaps neatly pressed, his six-shooter dangling suggestively between his legs.

"The new series asserts that you haven't been looking closely enough at the Kid," Alonso, a Marvel senior editor, said recently. A year ago, he was trying to come up with a way to revive the Western, a once robust but long neglected comic-book genre. "It sort of hit me one day that the Kid looked better than anyone had a right to. And he was tidier than the other cowboys in the Marvel catalogue." How could we not have known? The Kid is gay.

In five new issues due out this year, the Kid comes tumbling off the prairie to save a quiet town (with a mayor modelled on George W. Bush) from a gang of outlaws. Along the way, he falls for a pair of orphaned brothers and dishes his fellow hot shots. The Lone Ranger's outfit? "Fantastic." Wild Bill Hickok? "Very nice man. Bigger than life."

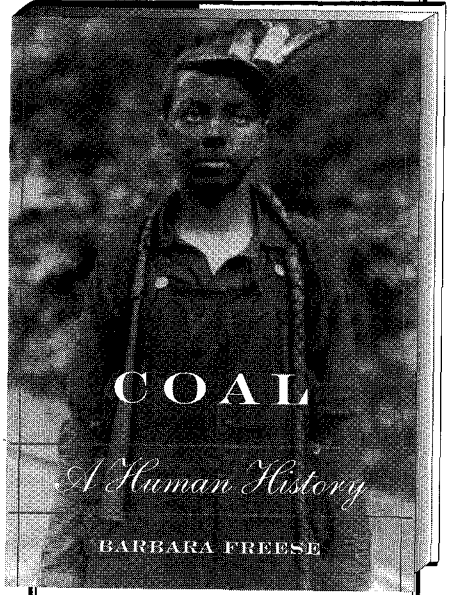
Ron Zimmerman, a Hollywood screenwriter and actor, who wrote the new episodes, thinks that the new Kid is a positive role model. "At least the Rawhide Kid kicks the shit out of everybody," he said. "Whenever a straight guy makes fun of him, the next panel is the Rawhide Kid just smashing into the guy's face. But he does it all with great humor and panache, and he's always gracious and well-mannered." It's important to realize that it's comedy, Zimmerman said, "but I do like the idea that this is a book that any gay person could pick up and go, 'Wow, what an empowering figure.' "

Of course, in these parts gay-cowboy empowerment goes back a few decades—to Randy Jones, the original cowboy from the nineteen-seventies gay pop troupe the Village People. Jones (who actually lives in the Village) was named after the Hollywood Western actor Randolph Scott. He grew up reading "Rawhide Kid." Jones proudly recalls creating his now iconic cowboy. He was approached while working a fashion show with Grace Jones (no relation), and was asked to join the band. "Everyone in it had to have a mustache," he said. "I said, 'Fine, man.' I had one. The Village People took the American stereotypical male images that Hollywood had been selling to the rest of the world and gave them a little bit of a twist and a wink and a wiggle and a wave."

Coincidentally, a New York music producer named Larry Dvoskin is searching for a gay country-music star—"like a male Shania Twain," Dvoskin says. But Jones, who left the Village People years ago, has no plans to take his spurs out of storage. "I figured I didn't want to be fifty years old and squeezed into size-31 jeans, wiggling my ass onstage," he said. "I don't parade around New York in a cowboy hat. But for a paid request I probably would."

—*Matt Dellinger*

The fuel behind modern history.



"In *Coal,* Barbara Freese takes us on **an enthralling journey** across time and across continents....Her style is engaging, her research impressive, her message an important one."

—Howard Zinn, author of *A People's History of the United States*

"This book—**full of lore, and also of insight**—will give you all the background you need to understand why this subject is so vital."

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ANNALS OF GASTRONOMY

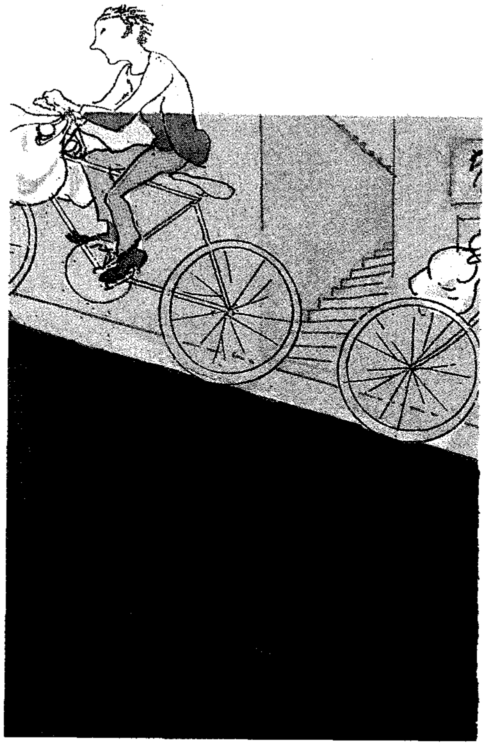
LOCAL BOUNTY

Grandfather knows best.

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

Although a grandparent who arrives on the scene after the birth of a child is traditionally pictured cooking dinner for sleep-deprived parents or stuffing the freezer with casseroles, I can tell you that these days it's mostly takeout. That is not simply the narrow view of a male grandparent who, admittedly, would have little to offer by way of home-cooked meals once he'd served the second dinner of meat loaf, accompanied by a salad of prewashed mesclun and a reminder of his mother's belief that meat loaf is one of the many dishes that always taste better the next day. As I was about to leave for San Francisco last spring to inspect my daughter Abigail's first baby, my son-in-law's mother had just completed a similar visit, and Abigail reported to me, "We had some good sushi while Brian's mom was here." Brian's mother is not Japanese. Abigail was referring to takeout sushi—or carryout, as they say in San Francisco, since, she warned me in advance, San Francisco is a place where restaurants are, in general, happy to prepare food to go but not happy to deliver it. In carryout, the accepted role of a visiting grandparent is to duck into the restaurant for the pickup while one parent waits behind the wheel of the double-parked car and the second parent remains at home, holding the baby with one hand and setting the table with the other.

The one exception, Abigail said, seems to be Chinese food, which does come directly to the door. In Manhattan, the victuals customarily referred to as Takeout Chinese—essentially, a separate cuisine, if that's the word, from the food available in Chinatown—tend to make the trip from restaurants to apartment houses dangling in plastic bags from the handlebars of rickety bicycles. (The proprietors of Chinese restaurants apparently feel about baskets the way proprietors of National Hockey League teams used to feel about helmets—sissy stuff. The restaurant proprietors still feel that way about helmets.) Manhattan is essentially flat—I've been riding a bicycle around the city for at least thirty years, and I have yet to shift gears—but San Francisco is, famously, not. When my mind wandered during the flight from New York, I could picture one of those impassive delivery boys from a Manhattan Chinese restaurant trying to make it up a nearly perpendicular San Francisco hill, his determination unaffected by breathlessness or leg cramps or the fact that the weird angle has already caused a container of hot-and-sour soup to burst open on his trousers.



I could picture a delivery boy from a Manhatt

JULES FEIFFER

When my mind wasn't wandering, I was thinking about whether to present the home-delivery issue to Abigail as one more reason why it made sense to live in New York rather than San Francisco. I could imagine myself delivering the pitch: "Are you saying that you're willing to raise this child—this innocent child—

in a city that has virtually no delivery, depriving her of the attention of whichever parent has to make the pickup or interrupting her schedule for a totally unnecessary car journey or, God forbid, cooking?" I could also imagine Abigail, who works as a legal-services lawyer for children, replying that, according to the laws and precedents she's familiar with, the sort of behavior I'd just described would not, strictly speaking, constitute child neglect.

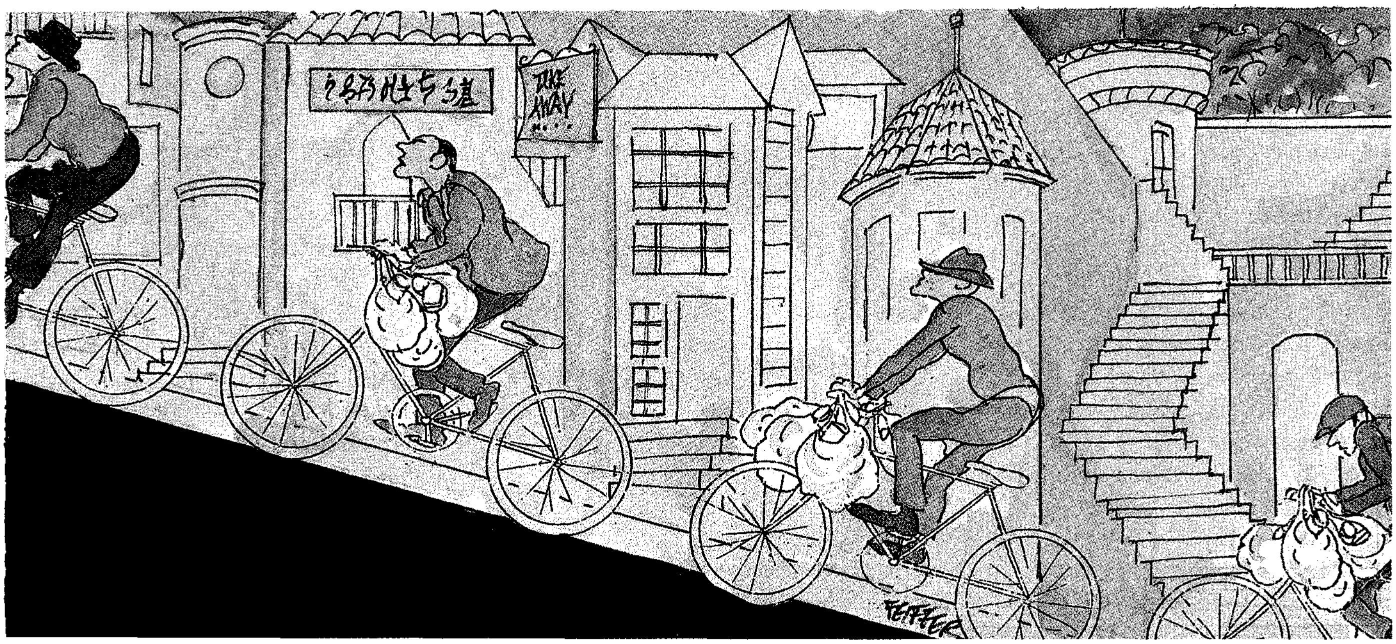
San Francisco's lack of takeout delivery wouldn't have been completely out of place among the arguments I have used to bolster my case for living back East. After I'd arrived for my baby inspection, one of the first items that caught my eye on the bulletin board in Abigail's kitchen was a *Times* clipping I had sent her and Brian, who also practices law of the humanity-helping rather than the disgustingly lucrative sort, about young professionals who had left the Bay Area in the wake of the dot-com collapse. The subhead of the piece read "Dot-Commers Who Once Flocked to San Francisco Are Turning Elsewhere." I had pasted on an additional subhead of my own composition: "Many Lawyers, Complaining of Inferior Bagels, Are Also Leaving."

I suppose there are studies that connect the ubiquitousness of takeout in Manhattan with the increase in two-job families or the supposed hatred of cooking by yuppies, some of whom are said to live in expensive apartments that have no kitchens. I have never actually run across an independently confirmed case of yuppies living in an expensive apartment with no kitchen, although a friend from that generation told me that he once sought to use the oven belonging to someone with whom he'd become romantically involved and found that she was using it to store fashion magazines.

It is also possible that the Manhattan restaurant industry simply came to realize that a city so compact that even prosperous families often do not own an automobile is an ideal place for developing a delivery business; literally thousands of customers live within a quick walk or a basketless bicycle ride from any restaurant. However it came about, it came gradually. When Abigail was born, in the late sixties, and her parents were thus sentenced for a while to a wearing but oddly pleasurable form of house arrest, the closest we got to takeout was for me to go to an accommodating Italian restaurant across the street and have them pack food in plastic containers that looked as if they were designed for some other purpose.

Sooner or later, though, the distribution of takeout menus became so relentless that a lot of New Yorkers began to see it as a form of commercially viable littering. I would guess, from my own experience, that most residential buildings in Manhattan receive menus from at least one restaurant every day. For a while, in fact, it was common in my neighborhood, Greenwich Village, to see signs on doors saying "No Menus"—sometimes in both English and Chinese. I never thought of posting such a sign myself. Yes, I occasionally get irritated when the steps in front of my house are littered with paper menus from two or three Chinese restaurants of the sort that seem to acquire their food from one gigantic kitchen, presided over in a dictatorial but not terribly inventive way by General Tso. But my attitude toward takeout menus is reflected in that brilliant slogan the New York State Lottery uses in its advertising: "Hey, you never know." It was a takeout menu, slipped through the mail slot of my door, that alerted me to a splendid little sushi restaurant on West Fourth Street called Aki, whose chef's experience working for the Japanese Ambassador to Jamaica had inspired him to put on the menu a roll that includes both jerk chicken and hearts of palm.

Delivery by a restaurant of Aki's quality reflects a second stage of development in the New York takeout scene. When delivery of Chinese food consisted strictly of Takeout Chinese, for instance, I did not think of it as an acceptable alternative even to scratching around in the refrigerator for some leftovers that were way beyond what my mother would have considered their



hinese restaurant trying to make it up a San Francisco hill, his determination unaffected by breathlessness or leg cramps.

"How's your beer coming, Eddie?"

• •

second-day peak. When we had some reason to eat our Chinese food at home rather than at a restaurant, I drove to Chinatown with my daughters and two or three of the dinner guests, everyone having been assigned to pick up a certain dish at a certain restaurant according to a split-second schedule—a food-gathering exercise we referred to as an Entebbe Raid.

Then, several years ago, Joe's Shanghai, a Queens restaurant that was noted for its soup dumplings, opened a Manhattan Chinatown branch that became a huge hit with the pasty-faced citizens the Chinese in America sometimes refer to, when in a benign mood, as "foreign devils." Soup dumplings, which are often called steamed buns on menus, get their name from the fact that the dumpling skin holds not only a core that is often made of pork and crab—Jewish connoisseurs sometimes refer to soup dumplings as "double-trayf specials"—but also a liquid so tasty that diners tend to be sanguine about the clothing stains they acquire while trying to get to it. Not long after Joe's Shanghai appeared on Pell Street, Goody's, a rival soup-dumpling destination in Queens, established a Manhattan beachhead a few blocks away. Soon, a similar Queens restaurant called Shanghai Tang opened close enough to the Village to put my house comfortably within the delivery area.

Shanghai Tang—which, in the Chinese-restaurant name-changing custom that turned, say, New York Noodletown into Great N.Y. Noodletown and Chao Chow into New Chao Chow, soon became Shanghai Tide and then Shanghai Tide in SoHo—listed on its menu, in addition to soup dumplings, dishes like Dry Fish Tripe with Pork Sinew. (Until some tweaking was done in the translation department a few years after the restaurant opened, that dish was actually on the menu as Dry Fish Stomach with Pork Sinus.) I don't often find myself yearning for Dry Fish Tripe with Pork Sinew, but I'm comforted by the notion that I live in a city where someone will bring Dry Fish Tripe with Pork Sinew to my door.

I wouldn't claim that Abigail's neighborhood was completely without eating possibilities. Several years ago, for instance, Yuet Lee, a restaurant on the edge of San Francisco's Chinatown, put a branch about three blocks from Abigail's house. Yuet Lee is a Hong Kong-style restaurant that turns out a spectacular version of fried squid—a dish I otherwise think of as routine bar food, often consumed by the sort of people who use their ovens to store fashion magazines. On a late afternoon of 1987, I was walking from an appointment near San Francisco's financial district when I discovered, by coming across little clots of people gathered in the streets, that the stock market had just had its largest single-day drop in history—what became known as Black Monday. Yuet Lee happened to be only two or three blocks away, and I went straight there. Within a few minutes, I was downing an order of fried squid that I had just watched emerge from the wok. It occurred to me that I might be the only thoroughly content person within several square miles. A branch near Abigail's house obviously enhanced my visits to San Francisco, but within a couple of years it closed. I managed to restrain myself from saying to Abigail, "I can't imagine what would keep you here now."

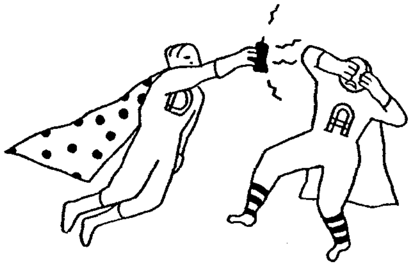
Why did I restrain myself? Because I'd like to think I'm above that sort of parental nagging. Also, I couldn't deny that Abigail's house remained within walking distance of the Mission—a neighborhood that is world headquarters for the San Francisco burrito. In San Francisco the burrito has been refined and embellished in much the same way that the pizza has been refined and embellished in Chicago. The San Francisco burrito, which is customarily wrapped in aluminum foil even if you have no intention of leaving the premises, is distinguished partly by the amount of rice and other side dishes included in the package and partly by sheer size. ("Out to Eat," the Lonely Planet guide to San Francisco restaurants, describes the Mission burrito as "a perfect rolled-up meal," and I would differ only in describing it as "two or three perfect rolled-up meals.") It is also so good that at times I've been tempted to put it on my list of favorite dishes that rarely seem to be served outside their place of origin.

Serious eaters in San Francisco tend to be loyal to their own burrito purveyor. Abigail, for instance, is a Taquería La Cumbre person. In the spirit in which a rabid baseball fan from St. Louis might hand out Cardinals caps, she once presented me with a T-shirt whose front is almost totally taken up by La Cumbre's logo—a heroic painting of a sort of Latinized Ava Gardner wearing crossed bandoliers and carrying both a bugle and an unfurled Mexican flag. My childhood friend Growler Ed Williams, who teaches Spanish literature at San Francisco State, is a Taquería Pancho Villa person. I know perfectly respectable people whose loyalty is to Taquería Cancún, which is only a few blocks from Abigail's house. I have had terrific burritos at all three. I can understand a reluctance to leave a place within easy shooting distance of the Mission.

After a couple of days in San Francisco, in fact, I had to admit to Abigail that the Mission was a pleasant spot for a grandfatherly stroll even aside from the availability of burritos: people raised in the Mexican culture know how to express their appreciation of a particularly stunning baby. As it turned out, a lot of the restaurants we used for carryout were in the Mission. Some of them were outposts of gentrification, described by Abigail as "in the Mission but not of the Mission." So we might be picking up tamales one night, followed the next night by "seared dayboat scallops with organic spinach and black-bean sauce." I wouldn't want to leave the impression that I thought eating carryout in San Francisco was a hardship. In fact, I tried to arrive at a fair appraisal to give Abigail as I left to catch my plane to New York. I finally came up with "It was O.K. for out of town."

Here's what I did when I got back to New York: I sorted my takeout menus. When I got through, I thought it was a pretty impressive collection. I had a wad of Indian and a wad of Mexican and a wad of Chinese (not just Takeout Chinese, either) and a wad of Japanese and a wad of pan-Asian and a wad of Italian and a wad of Middle Eastern and a lot of menus I found unsortable. I had about seventy-five menus.

I could picture Abigail on her next visit, looking on with interest as I placed the various types of menus in neat piles on the dining-room table, like the organizer of a bank heist divvying up the loot. The Chinese pile, I notice, is about an inch thick. "What's your pleasure?" I say to Abigail. "Chinese? Thai? Indian? Middle Eastern? Venezuelan? Malaysian? Italian? How about some octopus salad and artichoke ravioli from Da Andrea? How about risotto? There's now a place on Bleecker Street called Risotteria that offers about forty kinds of risotto, delivered to your door."



Abigail shrugs. "I guess Italian would be O.K.," she says, still noncommittal.

"Or we could do what we call a walkaway," I say. "Limiting ourselves to restaurants within a few hundred yards. It's a nice evening—we almost never get fog here—so maybe we could just stroll over and pick up, say, French fries at Petite Abeille or some zatter bread and marinated-chicken pitza at Moustache and bring them back here. If we feel up to walking an extra couple of hundred yards, of course, we could bring back lobster rolls from Pearl."

Abigail is beginning to look impressed. Maybe she had forgotten about Pearl's lobster rolls.

Then I'm offering all sorts of delivery possibilities—English fish-and-chips, Indian chaats, Japanese ramen, Singaporean fried rice. Menus are being flashed in front of her. I mention roasted chicken, the simple tuna-fish sandwich, soup dumplings. Yes, soup dumplings! I tell her that if she'd like to finish off by having Cones, just around the corner on Bleecker Street, bring over a pint of hazelnut gelato, that, too, can be arranged. "I think it's fair to say, Abigail," I tell her as I continue to flip through the menus, "that there's practically no type of food that can't be found within a few blocks."

Abigail shoots a meaningful look at my T-shirt. By chance, I'm wearing the La Cumbre shirt she gave me. At least she thinks it's by chance. Suddenly, like Ricky Jay producing a ten of clubs out of thin air, I open a menu that has appeared in my hand. "Speaking of which, here's a place that might interest you," I say. "It's called Kitchen/Market, in Chelsea. You'll notice it says 'Delivery.' " I show Abigail the menu. Near the center is a group of ten items. The heading above them reads "San Francisco Burritos." Abigail looks very impressed. ♦

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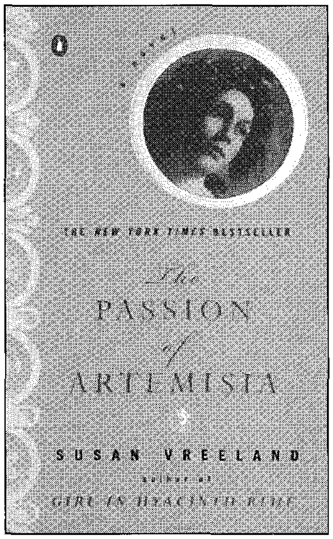

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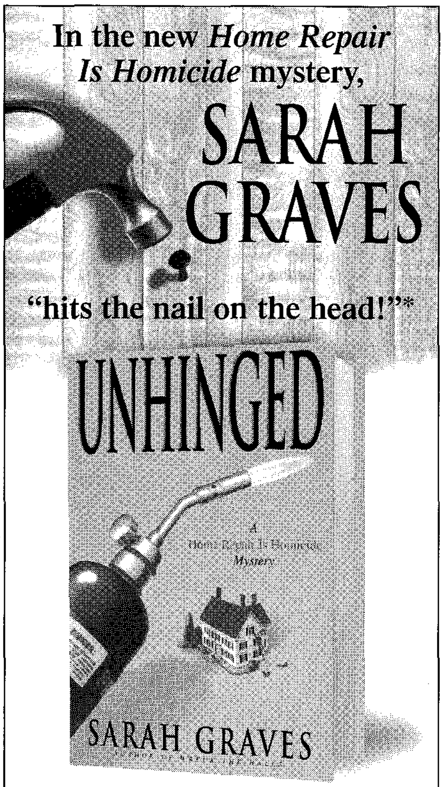

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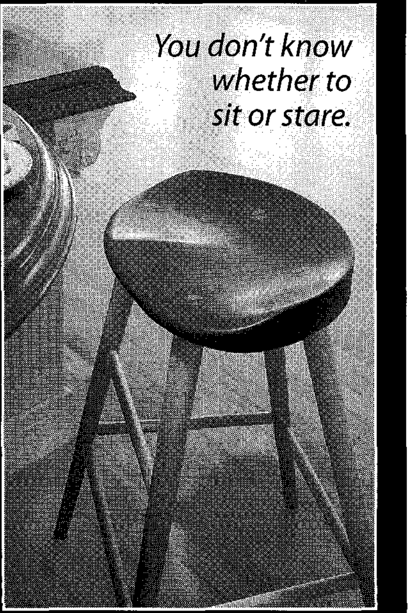

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HOT OR NOT?

BY ANDY BOROWITZ

Of all the existential questions that have plagued me over the years, none has been more persistent than this: Am I hot or not? Although most evidence favors the conclusion that I am, in fact, hot, there is still a slim chance that I am not, and that possibility transforms each day for me into an orgy of self-doubt. At times, I even envy the millions of people who clearly are not hot and know it, since they can at least get on with their lives.

I probably worry about the hot-or-not issue more than the average Joe does because I come from such a hot family. My mom and dad, for example, are both incredibly hot. Is my dad hotter than my mom? Some people think so, but there are an equal number who would swear that my mom is hotter. But this is splitting hairs. In my family, being hot has always been a fact of life, never questioned and never discussed, with the exception of an occasional "Hot is as hot does" from my Uncle Ezra. This is why I would never in a million years dream of asking my parents if I am hot or not. Besides, they would probably feel obligated to say that I'm hot even if I'm not, and I really don't feel like turning the two hottest people I know into liars.

Instead, I decided to ask the people I work with at the bank. Who better to resolve this matter than the folks who see me eight hours every day: my co-workers, my subordinates, and my new boss, Janet Gunderson, whom I didn't know all that well but who had just come over from Compliance and seemed like a straight shooter? I e-mailed each of them a photo of me lying on a leopard-skin rug wearing a red Speedo, gazing at the camera with my smoldering bedroom eyes. It was the hottest photo of me in existence, and I say that as a guy who has taken many, many hot pictures of himself over the years. I pressed "Send" and waited for the responses, fully prepared to take their verdict, good or ill, like a man.

When I didn't get any response back, something told me I'd made a mistake. When security escorted me out of the bank and changed the lock on my office door, that was another sign. Only later did I realize that one's workplace, rife as it is with politics, jealousy, and petty agendas, is the wrong place to get a good read on a question that requires brutal honesty. If I wanted complete candor, I would obviously have to ask people who had no vested interest in giving the "right" answer—in other words, total strangers.

And so I started accosting people in the street. Knocking on doors. Shimmying up drainpipes and climbing in second-story windows. But, everywhere I went, all I found were hopelessly unimaginative drones whose knee-jerk response to the question "Am I hot or not?" was to run to the nearest phone and call the police. Sometimes people would ask me if I was insane. I politely informed them that "Am I crazy or not?" was a question that didn't interest me in the least.

From the vantage point of my prison cell, I realize that to the outside world my quest for the truth about my hotness, or lack of it, may not seem worth the price I'm paying. But that's missing the point, I think. Socrates said that the unexamined life is not worth living, and even though he wasn't hot, he wasn't stupid, either. Maybe I'm in this joint for a reason, and not just the reason stated in my trial. Perhaps my fellow-inmates, stripped by society of every ounce of pretension and affect, are the people who will tell me once and for all whether I'm hot or not. One thing I've learned is that there's no harm in asking. ♦

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TR. You might say that he deserves a posthumous production credit for "TR An American Lion," the new documentary airing on The History Channel® on January 20th and 21st at 9 P.M./8C. Beyond this venerable president's lengthy list of accomplishments, which provided the inspiration for the production, many of his progeny have contributed their memories, thoughts, and family photographs to lend the program a remarkable quality of authenticity.

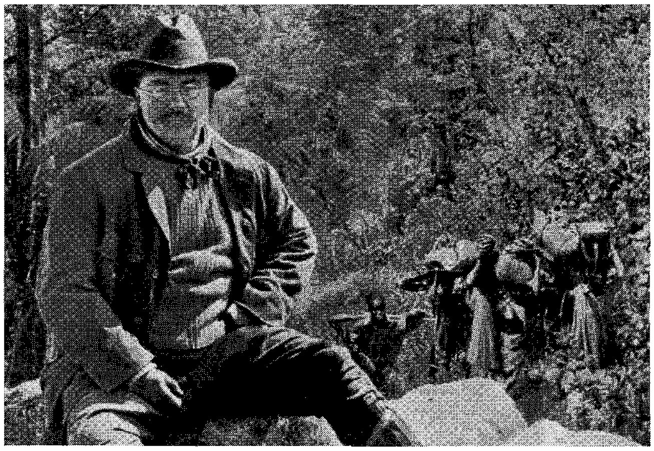
Behind The Scenes of TR AN AMERICAN LION on The History Channel

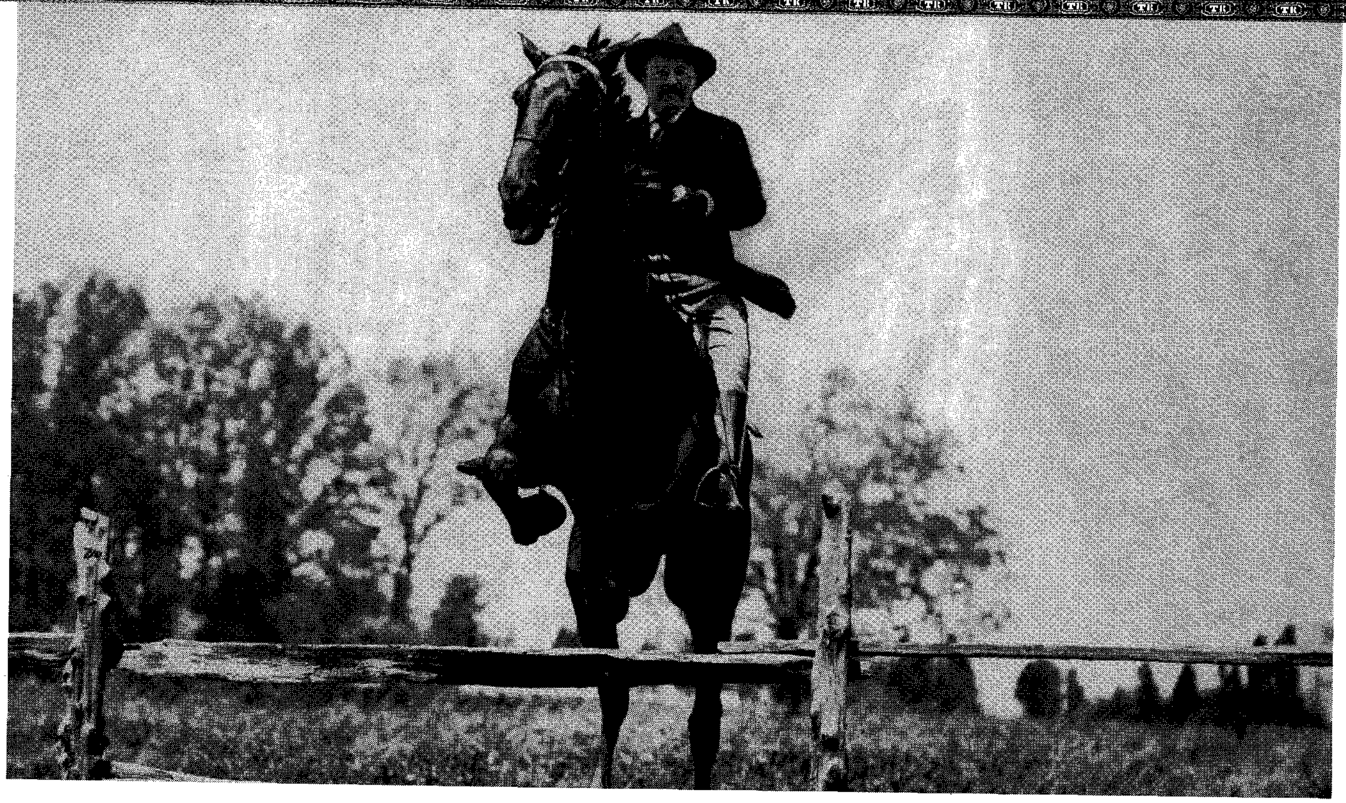
This Roosevelt "family affair" features seven of the twenty-sixth president's direct descendants: two grandchildren, three great grandchildren, and two great great grandchildren. While the elders offer their reflections—sharing firsthand observations and family lore—young members of the Roosevelt clan appear in the guise of Teddy himself during some of the show's meticulously accurate recreations.

Indeed, this injection of living Roosevelt DNA into the project is indicative of the care taken to ensure that the documentary remained true to the man. "When we started the project, our primary goal was to make more than a political chronology of Theodore Roosevelt's life. We wanted to evoke a complete portrait of the man, both public and private," recalls David De Vries, director, producer, and writer of "TR An American Lion."

Of course, even a cursory chronology of Roosevelt's many accomplishments could more than fill the series' four hours. A champion of wildlife conservation, an unflinching advocate for the rights of labor, and a visionary diplomat with an ambitious idea for America's role on the world stage, Roosevelt proved to be an ideal leader for a nation destined to dominate the twentieth century.

Add to this an impressive list of firsts enjoyed by Teddy Roosevelt. He was the first president to soar in an airplane; to explore the ocean's depth in a submarine; to own a car and a telephone; to welcome an African-American, Booker T. Washington, to the White House; to win the Nobel prize; and even to visit another country during his presidency. Roosevelt was truly a man leading at the dawn of an





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exciting new chapter in the history of the world.

These and the other achievements of Teddy Roosevelt form the foundation of "TR An American Lion." But it is the private and personal aspects of his life that give the program its lively and unforgettable quality. "So many people have an impression of Teddy Roosevelt as a blustering buffoon when in fact he possessed a great intellect," notes DeVries. "He wrote thirty-five books on topics ranging from naval history to wildlife. And, of course, he enjoyed a fulfilling life with his wife and children at Sagamore Hill as well as at the White House. We wanted to convey this other side of him."

"Many have an impression of him as a blustering buffoon when in fact he possessed a great intellect.... We wanted to convey this other side of Roosevelt."

This goal is successfully achieved in several ways. The selection of Roosevelt's writings, given voice to by Academy Award-winning actor Richard Dreyfuss, includes both landmark speeches and private reflections communicated in diaries and personal letters. Attention to small details in every reënactment greatly enhance the historical integrity of the project. A shot on Roosevelt's ranch in the Dakotas didn't offer just any vista of the frontier, but the same parcel of land he would have viewed. When shooting a scene that transpired during Teddy's term as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, only the exact space he occupied would suffice, not just any office in the Executive Office Building.

And only the actual coves once navigated by Roosevelt himself would do for one of the recurring visual motifs of the series, an image of the president rowing a small boat off the shores of his beloved Oyster Bay and Cold Spring Harbor. Incidentally, securing a period vessel for this sequence proved a significant challenge: Only after scouring the north shore of Long Island did the producers chance upon a vintage craft, a double-ended pea pod described in the vernacular of the day as a "pulling boat" rather than a rowboat.

While these details may escape the notice of many viewers, they contribute valuable insights and add richness to the portrayal of the life of an American titan.

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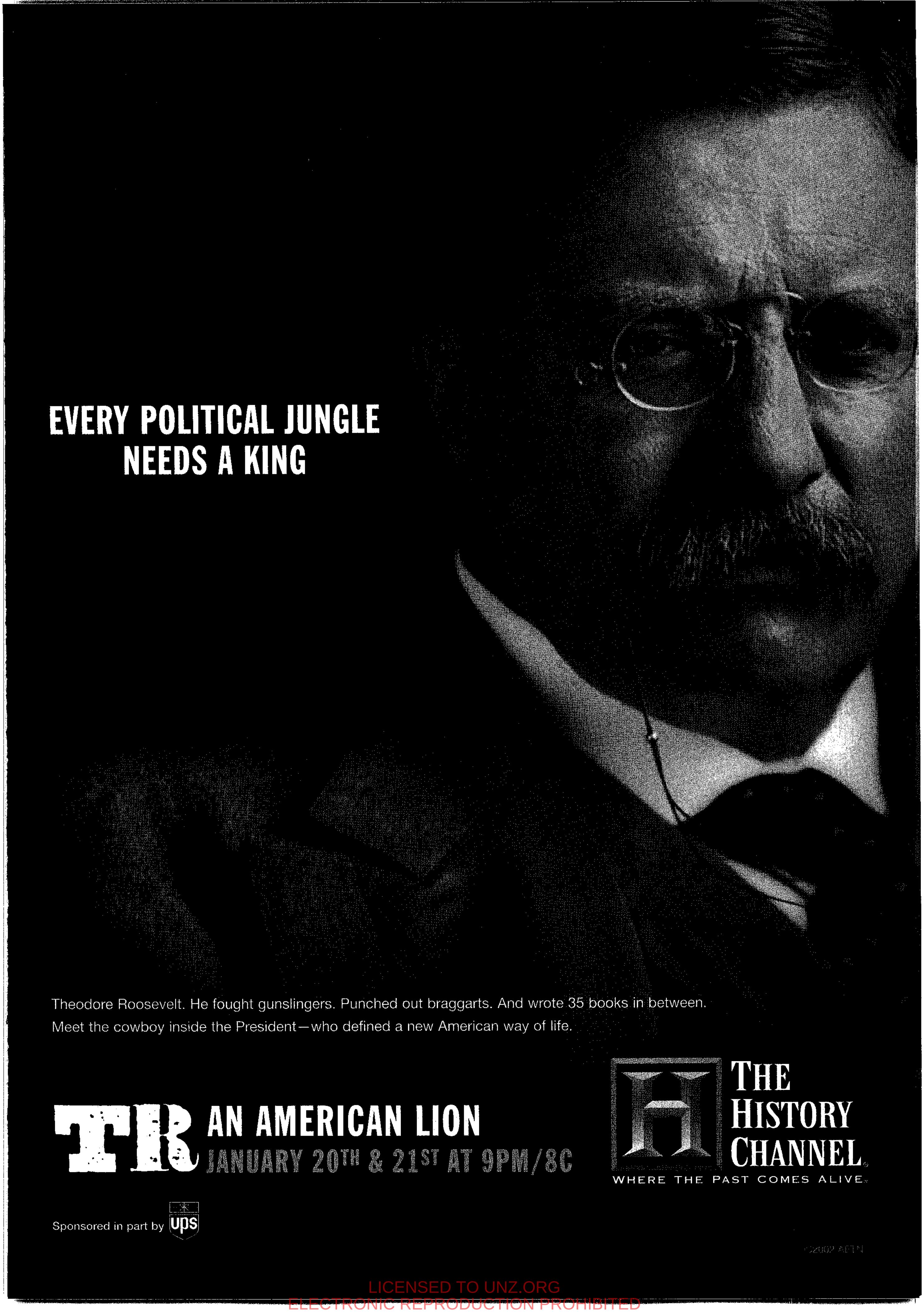

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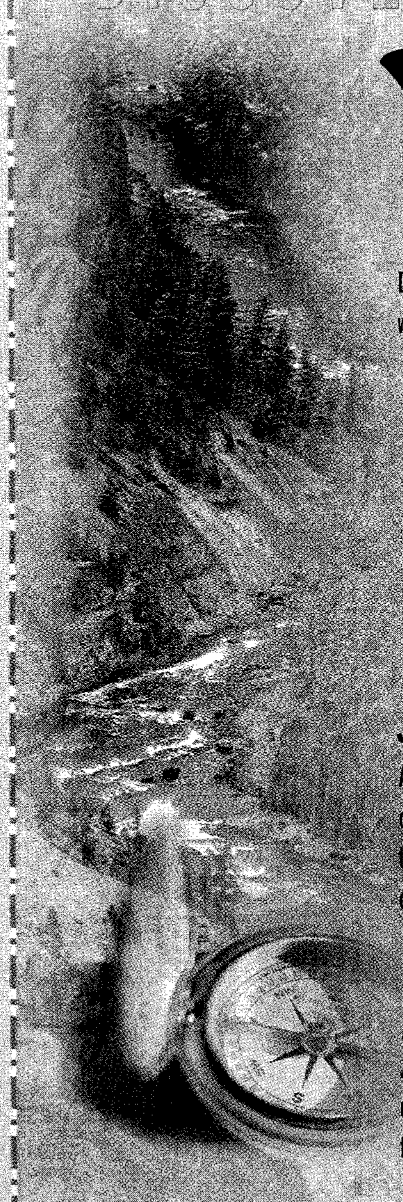

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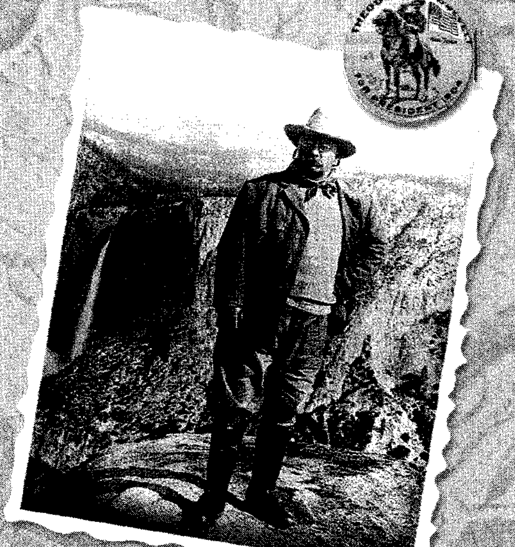

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THE SKY LINE

TRUTH IN ARCHITECTURE

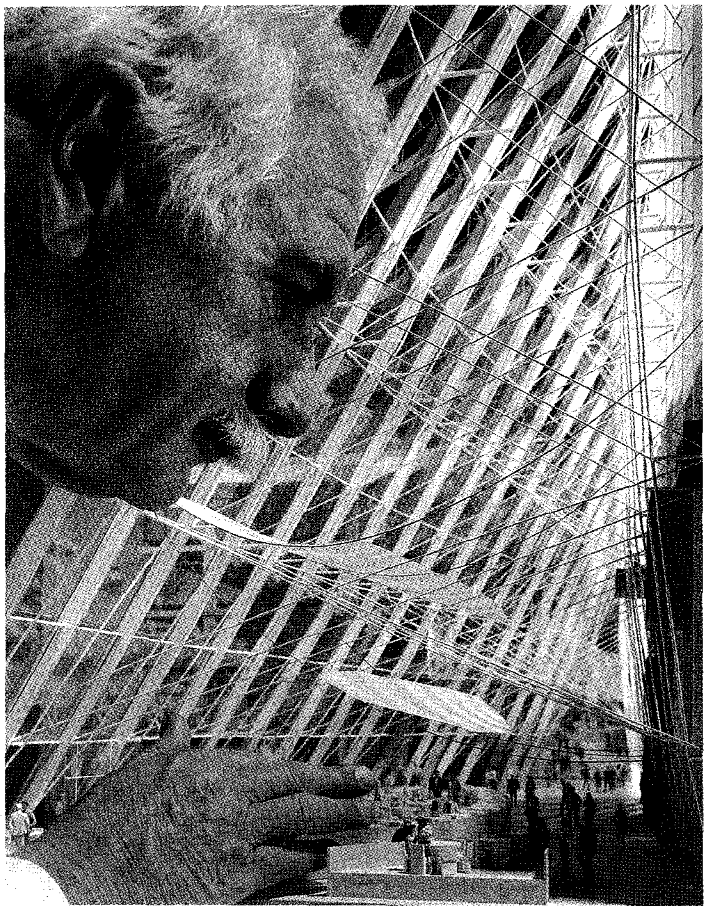
How Moshe Safdie decides what a building should be.

BY LARISSA MACFARQUHAR

Moshe Safdie is an architect who dislikes artistry. This is not to say that he objects to frills and curlicues, although, being an old-style modernist, he disapproves of those, too. His position is more extreme. In his first book, "Beyond Habitat," he wrote, "It is inconceivable that something which is not functional should be beautiful." He quoted a seemingly banal remark made by Philip Johnson—"There are no rules, surely no certainties in any of the arts. There is only the feeling of a wonderful freedom"—and responded, "I absolutely disagree with him. We have very few alternatives to the right solution. . . . A solution is a process of moving toward the truth, which is the complete opposite of freedom from rules."

In his early twenties, Safdie worked for Louis Kahn, and, like Kahn, he believes in contemplating what a building "wants to be." While another architect might experience the design process as a search for inspiration, in other words, Safdie experiences it as a search for constraint. When he sketches, Safdie conceives of himself not as creating but as channelling: channelling nature (the geography of the site), channelling culture (the spirit of the people who will use the building), and channelling the character of his materials. This is not a matter of modesty. On the contrary, it is as though Safdie aspired to be not an artist but a natural force, like evolution, producing not originality but truth. When he talks about the buildings he has built in Jerusalem, he says that he wishes them to appear "as if they had always been there": not so much brilliant as inevitable.

Safdie's aversion to arbitrary beauty is such that he has railed against art, especially contemporary art, which he often finds incomprehensible and self-important. Responding to a friend's objection to this view, he wrote:



Safdie with one of his models. Photograph by Jason Schmidt.

> I asked her to imagine that she was going to Mars, she was in a space ship built and designed in the best tradition of space ships. It had elaborate controls and dials and watches and warning lights, and it had TV screens, and it had apertures focusing on the sun and the moon and the planets, and it had sleeping compartments molded out of the wall. . . . I said, "Could you think of a Mondrian on the wall?" and she said, "No, it would not be right there. . . . You wouldn't need it because the entire space ship, the dials and the controls and the screens and the panels, they would all form kind of a Mondrian." This was, of course, precisely what I had meant.

One might expect someone of such severe aesthetic opinions to be dour and humorless, but in fact Safdie is exceptionally charming. People who have tried in vain to oppose one of his projects talk about his charm and the way he uses it to convince people that he is right. He is warm and gracious in an Old World way, always guiding and gesturing with his hands. He has an unusually high tolerance for eye contact. His voice has a rich timbre, as though layered on itself. He looks more Middle Eastern than American (he was born and grew up in Israel): he is tanned throughout the year, and he still wears the thick mustache he wore when he was a student. He can be joyful, but he is not lighthearted. He is not one to indulge in playfulness or eccentricity in his work. He is urbane, but not cool in his demeanor: he can be contemptuous of those who disagree with him. And, despite his success, there often seems about him an air of distracted dissatisfaction, of ambition irritated by circumstance.

Obtaining architectural commissions requires diplomacy, and Safdie is very good at that. He knows when to listen and when to speak. He makes clients feel that he cares about them, and that he is not the sort of architect—not an impetuous auteur, not a stern snob—who would hijack their project in the service of an intimidating aesthetic agenda. He knows, too, that a skillfully crafted model is crucial to inspiring faith, especially in clients who find it hard to picture a building from drawings. Safdie employs five full-time modelmakers, and he examines every detail of their productions. Is the grain on the plywood too large? That could break the illusion. Are the model's tiny trees the right kind of trees for the location of the building? Robert Saarnio, who was a curator at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, at the time Safdie proposed to the board of trustees his design for a new wing, still remembers the effect Safdie produced at that meeting. "He brought in two gorgeous de-mountable wood models," Saarnio says, "and the trustees were like kids with a new Christmas toy. The power of the beauty of those models was amazing. And then there was Safdie's own incredible demeanor. I mean, he walks into the room and he is suave and debonair and worldly and cosmopolitan. He's articulate, he's relaxed. By the time he set his model down and demonstrated with all his charisma how it came apart and could be refitted to show three different schemes, he had half the battle won."

Safdie is inundated with commissions, and he employs sixty-five architects to elaborate his plans. He designed the National Gallery in Ottawa, the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, and a Colosseum-like public library in Vancouver. For Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, he designed the Children's Memorial, the Memorial to the Deportees, and the new complex now being built. He is currently working on two airports (Tel Aviv and Toronto), seven museums (Jerusalem, Punjab, Salem, Savannah, Los Angeles, Tel Aviv, Washington, D.C.), one performing-arts center (Kansas City), three government buildings (including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms headquarters, in Washington), one corporate campus (Tel Aviv), two college campuses (Newton, Massachusetts, and San Diego), and one hunting lodge (Scotland). Last year, he was commissioned to design his most visible American project so far, the U.S. Institute of Peace, to be built on the Mall in Washington.

Recently, Safdie has been travelling every few months to Punjab, India, to supervise the construction of the Sikh-heritage museum he designed. Early one morning, he sat in the coffee shop of his hotel in Punjab's capital, Chandigarh, eating breakfast and staring out the window at the fog. In a few minutes, he was to be driven to the construction site, but he wondered how the driver would manage the trip—the day before, a Punjabi pop star had almost died in a car crash on the same road. Fog had already turned Safdie's journey into an Indian-style farce. His flight to Delhi from Tel Aviv two days earlier had been unable to land because of the weather, and the pilot had been compelled to circle back to Ahmadabad to refuel. Curiously, the fuel people at Ahmadabad had demanded to be paid in cash; not having enough cash on him, the pilot needed to contact the airline's office in Delhi, but lacked the means to do so until Safdie lent him his cell phone.

The Sikh-museum project came about in an unusual way. Several years ago, the Punjab Chief Minister paid an official visit to Israel, and in the course of the visit he was taken to Safdie's Children's Memorial at Yad Vashem. The Children's Memorial is a small, dark, windowless room cut into the side of a hill, like a cave. Its walls, ceiling, and floors are mirrors, and in its center are five candles whose flames are reflected many times, producing an effect of sheer number. The mirrors also create an illusion of indeterminate depth, even underfoot, and that, combined with the near-total darkness of the room and the unexpected slope of the floor, causes a feeling of queasy physical disorientation. When the Chief Minister stood inside the memorial, he began to cry, and he asked to meet its architect. The next day, Safdie called on him in his hotel room in Tel Aviv. The Chief Minister told Safdie that, as the Jews have suffered, so have the Sikhs suffered, and offered him the museum commission on the spot.

The fog was thick and white, and the car drove blindly through it. Tree branches flashed in and out of view like scratches on blank film. Bicycles and bullock carts suddenly appeared at close range out of the whiteness, swerving to avoid the car. As Safdie neared the site, the fog lifted, burned off by a chilly sun. The museum is being built in the small town of Anandpur Sahib, because Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the Sikh Gurus, founded the Khalsa order there, in 1699. The driver pulled up next to the site's sixteen-foot-high white marble foundation stone. The stone had been unveiled two years before, at a ground-breaking ceremony that attracted half a million people and involved troupes of singing schoolchildren, fireworks, elephants, confetti scat-

"Finish your breakfast, honey, and then we'll go drop Daddy off at jail."

tered from airplanes, and three hundred uniformed Sikh warriors on horses. Since then, the stone had become an object of worship for locals and pilgrims. Safdie found this odd but gratifying. Who could imagine the sort of attention the building itself might attract?

Safdie's arrival was a momentous event. The contractor's representative had prepared for the visit by carefully indicating, with chalk arrows on the ground, the route around the site that had been planned for him. Someone had hired four photographers—two for still pictures, two for video—to record the occasion. As Safdie marched around the site, more and more people tagged along behind, all pushing and straining to watch him and hear what he said, until he was leading a crowd of nearly forty.

When it is finished, the museum will look like a kind of aestheticized fortress (Khalsa Sikhs are traditionally warriors): the high, virtually windowless walls will be covered in rough stone, the same sandy color as the surrounding cliffs, and will spire up to sharp, irregular points and curves. Safdie's mission that day was to choose the materials that would form the building's surfaces: the stone tiles of its outer skin, the granite for the floor, and the steel panels for the roof. In addition, two lighting-fixture salesmen had travelled to the site—one from Bombay, one from Dubai—in order to make competing five-minute presentations, and two earth-stabilization specialists had prepared small artificial hills in order to demonstrate their ability to re-create, after the building was finished, the landscape of the site that had been torn up for construction.

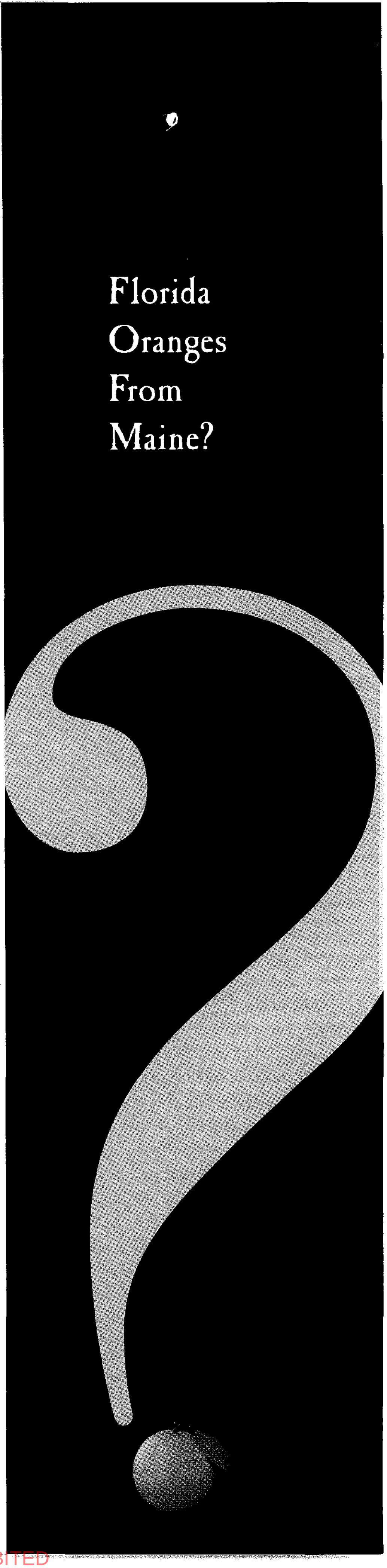
So that Safdie could compare different sorts of stone tile, the contractors had built a mockup—a temporary wall made of stones of varying colors. The stones had been cut into rectangles, smoothed, and then chipped, in order to produce a texture that was coarse but uniform. The trouble was, the chipping itself was not uniform: some stones had been chiselled with such precision that the chipping looked like a pattern artificially imposed rather than like natural roughness, which was the goal. Safdie wanted the building's surface to look like the landscape. Next to the mockup wall, a bony workman squatted in the mud, chipping a new stone with a hammer and chisel. Safdie paused to watch him, patting the sweat from his forehead with a handkerchief. The workman's chisel left neat little nicks in the stone's surface, a quarter of an inch apart.

"See," Safdie said, annoyed, turning to the contractor. "He's not doing it right."

While he was inspecting the dull yellow stone destined for exterior paving, Safdie was struck by the notion that the stone's matte texture would look good on the inside as well. He had originally intended the floors to be covered in granite, but when, earlier in the day he had seen the highly polished granite tiles in the construction office he hadn't liked them. They were too American, too much like the floors of museums everywhere.

"It's a very calm floor," he said, looking down at the stone. It would be much cheaper than granite, but would it wear as well? Safdie scuffed at the stone with the toe of his shoe. "Tell them to make a mockup with this stone," he said. "Seal it, stub a cigarette out on it, take some of the leftover curry from lunch and rub it in, and see how it looks. If it doesn't stain, let's do it."

Chandigarh, Punjab's capital, was designed by Le Corbusier in the early nineteen-fifties to be a city of the future: an international city unencumbered by region or heritage. Even now, Chandigarh doesn't look or sound or smell like an Indian city. On the roads there is no chaos of bicycle bells and trucks honking; the city's wide boulevards are divided by lines of trees and bordered with empty expanses of grass. Le Corbusier's famous government center is not open to the public. The elegant concrete balconies of the Secretariat are crammed with rubbish and broken furniture, and the long, horizontal lines of its façade are distorted by the jutting vents of air-conditioners. Safdie dreads such indignities being visited on his museum. The High Court Building and the Assembly Building—massive concrete structures, the one a porous grid, the other a heavy sweep upward to two



thrusting forms on the roof—face each other across a vast, deserted plaza, like great ruins. There are no trees or benches or people on the plaza: nothing to corrupt the mute bleakness of the flat gray plane. Safdie finds the bleakness depressing. He likes to picture the plaza filled with people. He imagines little shops or food stalls softening its borders and offering shade from the sun.

When Safdie was young, he was a great admirer of Le Corbusier and modernism. Having grown up in the collectivist spirit of Israel in the forties and fifties, spending his summers working on kibbutzim, he wanted to be the sort of architect who built buildings for the people: functional, economical buildings that solved social problems. He carried with him a memory of Haifa, the city where he was born, as a paradise of clean white three-story Bauhaus-style apartment blocks surrounded by trees. He liked the industrial aesthetic of the original International Style, and the way that modernists took seriously the role of the architect in shaping the moral temper of the age.

But Safdie has always found modernism too severe—too arid in mood, too purist in its rejection of reference to history or place. Modernism's urban sublime is not to his taste: his buildings aspire to an inflected tranquillity. He dislikes, too, the way that Le Corbusier's buildings tend to stand alone in parks or plazas, like sculptures in a museum: he wants his architecture to be permeable and welcoming, to become part of the life of the street. He loves the pied hubbub of a bazaar, and in many of his projects he incorporates shops and cafés at the ground level so that people will flow naturally in from the sidewalk and create such hubbub. (Le Corbusier loathed hubbub, loathed disorder of any sort. He wrote, "Man walks in a straight line because he has a goal . . . and he goes straight to it. The pack-donkey meanders along, meditates a little in his scatter-brained and distracted fashion, he zigzags." One of Le Corbusier's principles of urbanism was the "death of the street.")

Safdie is ambivalent about modernism, but he doesn't like postmodernism, either: he finds its pastiche, "bag of tricks" approach to history frilly and glib. He especially disapproves of the deconstructivism of architects such as Peter Eisenman and Rem Koolhaas—"all these buildings," as he puts it, "that look like an earthquake shook them. Studied chaos. Collision. Everything going all over the place." Although he is friendly with Frank Gehry, he is ambivalent about his aesthetic. "Moshe thought my work was a jumble, he thought it was a big ego trip or a joke or something," Gehry says. "He asked me to stop being Stravinsky and be Sibelius. Be peaceful, he said—we need peace." Among his contemporaries, Safdie aligns himself with Norman Foster and Renzo Piano, both of whom, like Safdie, adhere to the modernist doctrine that a building should make truthful statements about itself: its structure should be apparent from its exterior, and its surface should consist of the material that forms its support, rather than some sort of coating or skin.

It is not that Safdie is a socialist puritan—far from it. He flies first class. He wears beautiful, finely woven shirts that he designs himself and has sewn up by a shirtmaker. He takes great pleasure in eating: he is the sort of person who always squeezes his orange juice by hand, or drives far out of his way to procure a strongly flavored olive oil. To him, appreciation of such sensual delights—wine, clothing, food—is not an indulgence of whim but, rather, an ennobling of ordinary need, as architecture is an ennobling of the need for shelter. Safdie's problem with postmodernism is not that it is hedonistic but that it is esoteric. In 1981, he published a polemical article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, titled "Private Jokes in Public Places," in which he reproached postmodernists for indulging in the sort of irony and jokes that only other architects could appreciate. Safdie feels that buildings are inherently public, and as such should aspire to amenities that anyone can understand: sunlight, a view, uplift without intimidation, a comfortable place to sit.

Clients who hire Safdie tend to do so because they want a building that is calming, rather than striking or monumental. Dr. Uri Herscher, president of the Skirball Cultural Center, a Jewish museum in Los Angeles that Safdie designed and expanded recently, is one such client. "The institution needed to be humane and hospitable," Herscher says. "No heavy doors that say, I need to knock on them five times. Human size was very important to me. The rooms here are like rooms in your home. I wanted everybody's self-esteem to be elevated rather than reduced. I was not interested in a cathedral where everybody looks tiny."

The spaces that Safdie has designed for himself adhere to the same comfortable-functionalist aesthetic. His offices in Somerville are housed in an old engine-repair shop; inside, the walls

DAY AND AGE

Skimming by,
the milky spill of my old eye,
the mute white cat
now skirts me at the store.
Retarded and alert.

What good are instincts anymore?
Who does the math
for lengths of desperation
and how far to the door?

A woman, pregnant
like a red wool bud,
is circling the rink.
Catastrophe, I think.

—*Dana Goodyear*

are exposed brick, and thick black pipes run along rough wood ceilings. The windows are shaded from the outside by slatted wooden awnings that are densely braided with ivy that Safdie trained to grow there; in winter, when the vines are bare, they let in light, and in summer, when the vines are leafy, they filter the sun. His houses in Cambridge and Jerusalem are white-walled and sunny, furnished with a mixture of simple modern (nothing too square) and simple antique (nothing too curly). The rooms contain enough objects to stave off a pretentious starkness, but too few to be cluttered. He lives with his second wife, Michal, with whom he has two college-age daughters. The interiors of the two houses are oddly similar, which may have something to do with the fact that Michal grew up in Jerusalem and at one point wanted to move back there. (When she married Safdie, she also gave up her profession, social work, for a new one, photography, so that her life would be more in tune with his.)

Safdie grew up in a secular household in Haifa, which is the third-largest city in Israel—an industrial center known for its unions and its left-wing politics. His parents were Sephardic Jews whose families had roots in Aleppo, Syria. When Safdie was young, in the nineteen-forties (he was born in 1938), he, like most children he knew, intended to start a kibbutz. But after the national government began imposing restrictions on imports, in the early fifties, Safdie's father's textile-importing business failed, and, disgusted by what he felt to be encroaching socialism, Safdie *père* decided to move his family to Canada. Moshe, who was fifteen, finished high school in Montreal and enrolled in architecture school at McGill. Shortly thereafter, he married his first wife, Nina, who had emigrated to Canada from Israel the same year as Safdie. Their first child, Taal, was born in 1961, when Safdie was twenty-two; their son Oren was born in 1965.

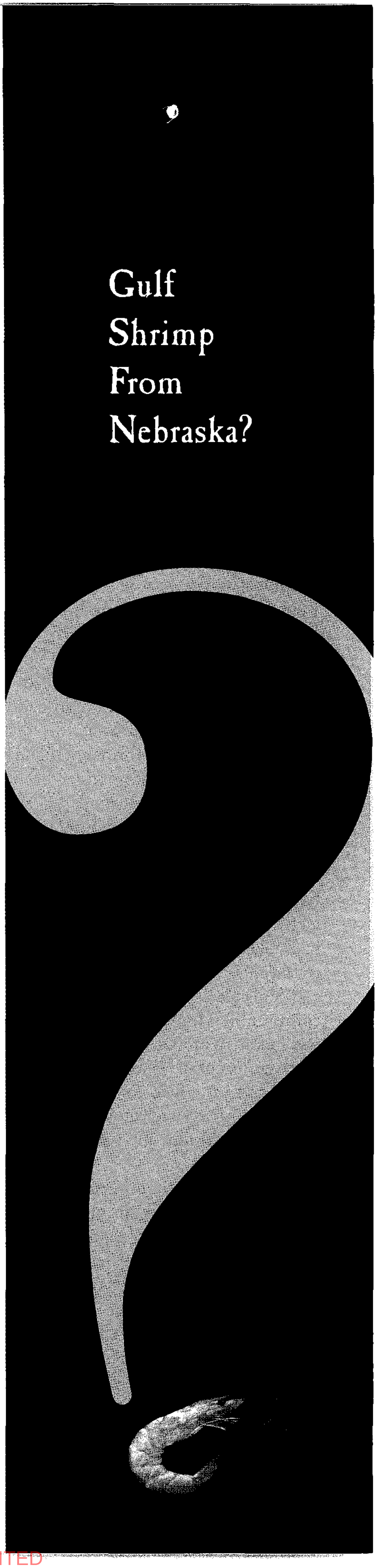
For his thesis project, Safdie originally intended to design a building for the Israeli Knesset, but then he became interested in the problem of urban housing. He found high-rises dismal—he felt that in order to thrive human beings needed to have access to a private garden and a dwelling sufficiently distinct from its neighbors to be recognizable from the street—but he thought suburbs wasteful of land. He decided to invent a housing system that would be as dense and economical as a high-rise while affording the amenities of suburbia. The word "system" was important to him: it wasn't just a building he was after—he wanted a revolution. He wanted to rationalize architecture, to free it from the unreliable vagaries of the architect-genius. He also wanted to bring the profession into the machine age, by prefabricating building units in a factory.

This idea had been proposed before. Gropius had suggested it as early as 1909, and in 1923 Le Corbusier had written, in one of his odd little odes:

> We must create the mass-production spirit.
> The spirit of constructing mass-production houses.
> The spirit of living in mass-production houses.
> The spirit of conceiving mass-production houses.

Still, no one had yet successfully devised a mass-production system that could manufacture buildings more cheaply than conventional methods. Safdie conceived of a series of concrete boxes that would be cast off-site and then lifted by cranes onto a frame.

Just a few years later, his design, which he called Habitat, was, improbably, selected to be built as part of Expo '67, a world exposition to be held in Montreal. Safdie worked eighteen- and twenty-hour days for months. No aspect of the construction escaped his attention. At one point, Expo's Department of Exhibits decided that the interiors of Habitat should be decorated by the editors of *Chatelaine*, a Canadian women's magazine, and Safdie threatened to have the editors stopped by court injunction. When *Chatelaine* installed an eight-foot pink-and-lime spherical play sculpture in Habitat's plaza, Safdie sneaked onto the site in the middle of the night and tried to roll it away, but he was caught by security guards. Even after Habitat was finished and Safdie had moved his family into one of its apartments, he continued to patrol the building. He would spot gold-anodized ashtrays in the lobby and try



to get them replaced with something more tasteful. After two years, his wife became so irritated by his obsessiveness that she insisted they move out.

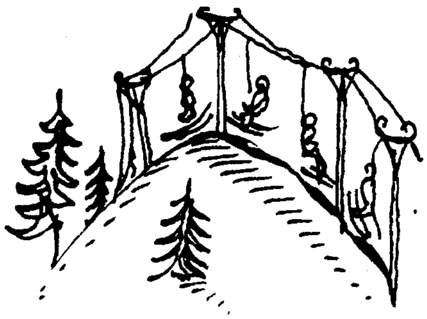
Built on a man-made peninsula extending into the St. Lawrence River, Habitat has water views on both sides, and consists of exposed-concrete boxes piled irregularly on top of each other and cantilevered out over gaps through which you can see the sky. Its complexity is marvellously sophisticated, but at the same time there is something childlike and exhilarating about it—perhaps because the partial separation and cantilevering of the concrete boxes made each appear to be a single room suspended in air, like a treehouse. It looks like a Lego sculpture, or a modernist beehive.

Habitat's resemblance to a beehive was not an accident. A few years before Expo, a colleague in Louis Kahn's office had introduced Safdie to a 1917 book about morphology, "On Growth and Form," by the Scottish zoologist and classical scholar D'Arcy Thompson, and Safdie had become consumed by the idea that architectural forms should resemble natural ones—forms (like that of the shell or the beehive) whose geometries had evolved to serve a purpose. At around the same time, Safdie also became enamored of another, more recent book—"Architecture Without Architects," by Bernard Rudofsky. Rudofsky had collected examples of "vernacular architecture": Mediterranean hill villages and Sudanese cliff dwellings, in which communities building in conformity with tradition produced a series of forms that were repetitive—indeed, nearly identical—and yet added up to something that felt satisfying and whole, rather than soulless, as did repetition in a modern suburb.

Safdie liked natural forms and vernacular architecture for the same reason: both produced a beauty that seemed to evolve rather than be created, a beauty of necessity rather than art. Natural and vernacular forms fulfilled the most rigorous requirements of functionalism, while softening the severity of the International Style—they combined the economy of Le Corbusier with the organicism of Frank Lloyd Wright. The idea of people building houses for themselves as animals built nests, in a primitive form of self-expression, also appealed to Safdie politically, but this was not to say that he was in favor of self-expression as commonly understood. He knew very well that to grant real self-expression to people would result in chaotic vulgarity. No, vernacular architecture was a useful model for him because its forms were as narrowly determinate as the forms of nature: it was an individualism whose products were—paradoxically, thankfully—always the same.

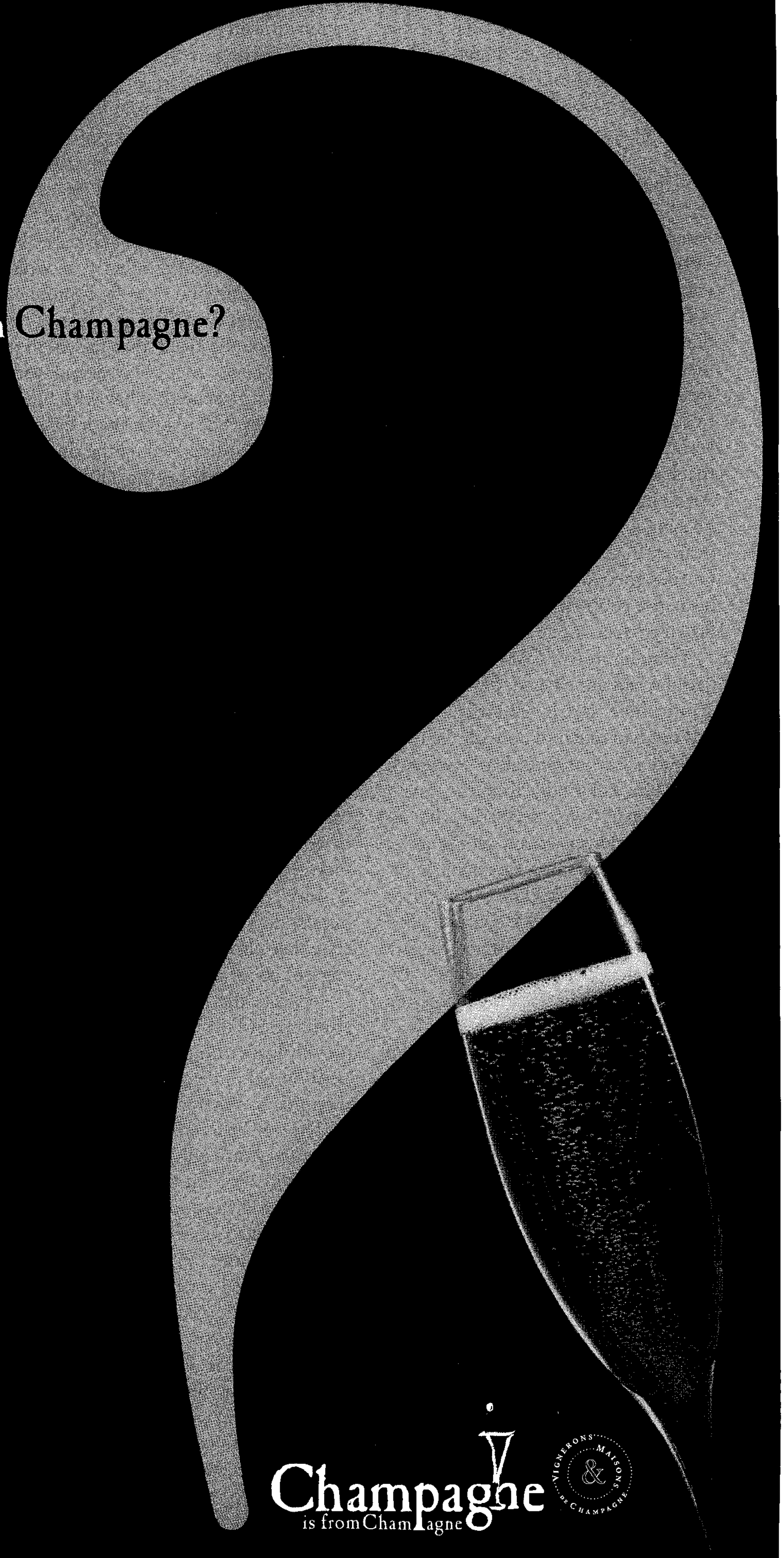
Habitat was an immediate and astonishing success. All sorts of dignitaries came to visit the building—Charles de Gaulle, Indira Gandhi, Princess Margaret, Earl Mountbatten, Lady Bird Johnson. *Newsweek* put a photograph of Safdie on its cover, under the banner "The Shape of Things to Come." Safdie was spoken of, along with Aldo Van Eyck, Frei Otto, Robert Venturi, and James Stirling, as one of the leaders of a third generation of modern architects—the generation born between the wars. Reviewing Safdie's first book, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt wrote in the *Times,* "Moshe Safdie is a genius; we should elect him Mayor of New York City, if not emperor of the world, tomorrow; and he has put together in his book 'Beyond Habitat' the most interesting collection of ideas I have come across since I first heard about the wheel." But then the problems began.

For ten years after Habitat, Safdie built almost nothing. Many people approached him with proposals, but nearly all of them fell through. He was commissioned to design a Habitat for Puerto Rico, a Habitat for New York City, a Habitat for Rochester, a Habitat for Jerusalem, and a Habitat for Tehran, but none were built: he could never persuade a client to plan on a large enough scale to make prefabrication cost-effective. The Shahbanu of Iran, the wife of the Shah, commissioned Safdie to design a whole new city in Senegal to serve as a center for trade between Senegal and Iran, but the plan was abandoned when the Shah was overthrown. Safdie found it especially painful that, having been hailed in Montreal in 1967 as a local hero, he then received no Canadian commissions at all for more than a decade. He was so discouraged that, in 1978, he accepted an offer to become the head of Harvard's urban-design program, and emigrated to America. In 1985, Safdie was commissioned by the developer and publisher Mort Zuckerman to design a building for Columbus Circle that would incorporate the office of Salomon Brothers, a hotel, condominiums, and a shopping center, but, almost from the beginning, the project was a catastrophe. Several postmodernist critics reviled the plan, saying that the building was just the sort of rebarbative modernist skyscraper that tore through the delicate Deco fabric of New York. There was a public outcry against it, involving Jacqueline Onassis, on the ground that the towers would cast gigantic shadows over Central Park. Zuckerman hired another architect.



It's not just on the level of construction that Safdie has had a difficult time. Since Habitat, he has received as much criticism as praise. "Habitat is still a masterpiece in my opinion, but it is the best thing he's ever done by far," one representative detractor says. "Safdie has come to be thought of in the architectural world as a very talented, very successful showman." An architecture critic says, "Habitat was the Guggenheim Bilbao of the moment. It was actually even more than that, because it was believed to be a solution: it was going to solve housing problems, be a symbol of community, all this stuff. Expectations got entirely out of wack with reality. Everybody expected that if you do Habitat at twenty-nine the next thing ought to be Chartres." Joseph Leo Koerner, an art historian and a client of Safdie's, believes that Safdie's poor critical reputation is due in part to his lack of a consistent style, which makes him look pragmatic and without aesthetic convictions. "He's not priestlike," Koerner says. "Now, if he were an *eccentric* eclectic person, he might get a better reception, but his volume also annoys the critics." All the

Champagne Not From Champagne?



No way!

Oh, sure, some sparkling wines may look and even taste the part, but if it's not from Champagne, it's simply not true Champagne. That's because Champagne isn't merely a type of wine. It's a specific region 90 miles east of Paris with a long history of winemaking expertise.

Combine this unique northern location with a one of a kind climate and chalky soil as well as hundreds of years of experience and tradition. The result? The only grapes that yield the Champagne of legend — a heavenly wine that can be imitated but never duplicated. If the grapes aren't from this unique region where winemaking is a special art, then the wine really isn't authentic champagne. It does matter where wines come from. A Napa wine is from Napa, a Willamette wine is from Willamette and a Red Mountain wine is from Red Mountain, Washington.

And, if it's not from Champagne, it's simply not true Champagne.

Champagne
is from Champagne

Vignerons & Maisons de Champagne

same, his buildings tend to be enormously popular with the public. His plan for the Colosseum-like library in Vancouver was dubbed "pure Disney" by critics, but it won a public-opinion poll by seventy per cent.

In the middle of Expo, on June 5, 1967, the Six-Day War broke out in Israel. That morning, Safdie called the Israeli Consul General in Canada and volunteered for the Army. The war was over before he was conscripted, but Safdie flew back to Israel anyway, for the first time since he had left, at fifteen, to speak at a conference. Soon, he received two commissions: to rebuild a Sephardic yeshiva across from the Western Wall that had been destroyed by the Jordanian Army in 1948; and to build a block of housing and restore part of the Jewish quarter. In a financially impractical gesture designed to demonstrate his stake in his native country, Safdie opened an office in Jerusalem.

Working in Israel was more difficult than he had anticipated. Having grown up in Haifa and in Montreal, Safdie had not had much to do with the ultra-Orthodox Jews of Jerusalem—people he found (and still finds), from the vantage of his own left-wing secularism, not just alien but often positively repellent. Allowances he will make for people in distant parts of the world he will not make for people at home. "We couldn't talk to each other, we couldn't agree on anything, it was a disaster," Safdie says. "Everything they stood for irritated me, and I suppose it was true in the reverse."

Safdie was commissioned to design the Children's Memorial in 1976, but some of the museum's directors didn't like his idea—they found it kitschy and disco-like—and the memorial wasn't built until a forceful donor couple presented themselves, ten years later. Even now, when Safdie meets with the curators to discuss the new structure he has designed for Yad Vashem, he finds himself regarded with suspicion. "Yad Vashem is sacred in Israel," he says, "so every line I draw there is interpreted, interpreted, interpreted. The meetings take all day." Safdie's disagreements with Yad Vashem's director are particularly fraught, because the director tends to maintain that any architecturally expressive element is inappropriate in a museum about the Holocaust, and Safdie finds this position difficult to argue against.

Still, he persists with his Israeli work. One morning, he drove to a religious neighborhood near Ramot to inspect a mockup—a small sample version of one of the concrete walls of the new Yad Vashem buildings. It was a beautiful drive. Safdie had caught the cusp of the season, and since his arrival in Israel a few days before it had suddenly become spring. The almond trees had sprouted white blossoms, and the grass banks on the sides of the roads that had been a faded olive color over the weekend were now bright green and yellow with flowering bushes. The road through the religious neighborhood led up the side of a steep hill and ended at the hill's summit.

Safdie got out of the car and slowly turned around in a circle, his hands on his hips. The sun was shining, it was too windy for clouds, and the houses and trees down in the valley stood out in sharp focus. "What is this?" he said to himself in amazement. He had had no idea that such an extraordinary site existed. He wondered whether he could get his hands on it. It turned out that the land had been intended for a stadium, but the residents had managed to get the project cancelled because it would offend them to witness games played on the Sabbath. Now the site was to be a shopping center. A waste, Safdie felt. He walked over to inspect the mockup—a tall wall of concrete that tilted away from its base at an angle of about seventy degrees, designed to replicate the tilted wall of the museum's exit. (The building will be shaped roughly like a trumpet, with much of the stem buried underground, and the bell emerging in a triangular flare.)

The construction of the tilted wall presented a difficult problem. Concrete seems to be a robust material, but it is in fact fickle stuff, exquisitely sensitive to every detail of its composition and treatment. Since the harsh look of low-quality exposed concrete went out, with Brutalism, in the sixties, some architects have avoided exposed concrete altogether, because its finish is so difficult to control. Adding to the usual complications of working with concrete, Safdie wanted this wall to be built as a single slab, partly because it would be stronger that way, and partly because he felt that panels would make the building look man-made, rather than like a natural object emerging from the ground. Because the wall was to be made in one piece, the concrete had to be poured in place, on a slant, which made it more difficult for air to escape upward and thus made bubbles more likely. Safdie had further decreed that the wall not be coated in any way, feeling that the rawness of exposed concrete was essential to prevent the building from seeming cute. He wanted the wall to look strong and industrial, like a dam. (Wanting a building to look industrial and like nature is not, in Safdie's mind, a contradiction: both involve, for him, a rough artlessness.)

The mockup was terrible. The concrete was pockmarked with air bubbles, dark and discolored in patches, the line of the corners rough. It had even been patched in places, which was cheating. What's more, the contractors had known it was bad and didn't seem to care. "Typical Israeli union types," Safdie said, driving away. But the second mockup he saw that morning was very different.

About fifteen people were waiting to greet him at the site, all talking at once and pressing forward to shake his hand. The contractors had laid out a table of soda and pastries, and had flown in two men from Austria who were specialists in the type of rubber that had been used for the mold. The concrete looked very good indeed. Safdie asked about its composition: had they added plasticizers to the concrete to make it flow in more easily, possibly weakening it in the process? Had they poured it drier or wetter? (Drier concrete makes for a finer surface but it's lumpy and hard to pour.) Had they used form oil on the mold? (Oil makes removal from the mold easier but can stain.) While Safdie was talking to the contractors, he saw some of their workmen standing in front of the mockup, proudly posing for a photograph. Maybe the country was changing.

Perhaps Safdie's most significant project in Israel to date is his plan for the area in front of the Western Wall—the last remaining wall of the Second Temple that Herod rebuilt at the time of Christ, and the holiest site for Jewish prayer in the world. At the moment, the area in front of the wall is an expanse of plain pavement: it looks much as it did in 1967 when, immediately after Israel won back the Old City from Jordan, General

Moshe Dayan ordered the razing of the buildings that had been built up to the wall's edge. Safdie first sketched a plan for this space in 1974. He proposed to build a series of terraced plazas that would lead gradually up from the Western Wall to the old city, thus affording a view of the wall to those in the back of the large crowds that assemble on festival days. He devised a roofed walkway so that Arabs walking to the old city from the villages south of Jerusalem could pass by the wall's plazas without entering them (as things are now, many Arabs take a long way around in order to avoid the humiliation of a security check). Most significant, Safdie proposed to dig nine metres down in front of the wall to the level of the Herodian street, which, as excavations of one part of it have proved, is still in perfect condition. This not only would expose the Herodian paving stones but would also increase the height and spectacle of the wall itself.

Safdie's plan for the wall has languished for nearly thirty years, because of ongoing controversy. The right-wing nationalists whom Safdie objects to politically have helped him here, wanting to build up the grandeur of Jerusalem. But construction has been blocked by Safdie's old enemies, the Orthodox, who feel affronted, Safdie believes, at the idea that anyone but them should be in charge of a project on such sacred ground.

In Jerusalem, Safdie is known for his dovish views. He once toyed with the idea of running for mayor, but gave it up when he realized that someone who had not been through the defense establishment (he served in the Army but only as a private) didn't have a chance of becoming Prime Minister. Safdie remembers as one of the most joyful days of his life the evening in 1994 when Yitzhak and Leah Rabin, who were friends of his, came to dinner at his house in Jerusalem, just hours after Rabin signed the peace agreement with Jordan. "The mood was euphoric," Safdie says. "Everybody was elated, because the peace with Jordan was the happiest peace. The peace with Egypt, we gave up Sinai and there was bloodshed. The peace with the Palestinians, if it ever comes, will have its complications. But the peace with Jordan was nothing but joy. Everybody loved Hussein in this country, and it was the first time that people felt the region was really changing. It was just a wonderful, wonderful day."

In the last year, Safdie, like everyone else in Israel, has despaired of peace, but the intifada has had almost no effect on his work. The building at Yad Vashem is coming along smoothly, as is construction at the Tel Aviv airport. And Safdie is not the sort of artist to worry, in the wake of tragedy, whether his designs, and art in general, are insensitive or frivolous. He has always been a sober functionalist, and has always seen himself as striving to improve an imperfect world in which housing is unattractive, workplaces dark and airless, and public spaces insufficiently democratic. Besides, it is in Jerusalem, more than anyplace else, where Safdie can see that he has left his mark. Most of his buildings are scattered, from India to Scotland, but in Jerusalem they shape the city.

Looking east from the top of David's Citadel, toward the Arab quarter, you see a medieval confusion of small, flat rooftops cluttered with laundry and plastic chairs and satellite dishes—a staccato of irregular shapes, interrupted, in the foreground, by the great gray dome of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and, farther away, the gold Dome of the Rock. To the west, toward Jewish West Jerusalem, the view is more orderly: the buildings are bigger and more evenly spaced. Here, in the foreground, are the viney arcades, courtyards filled with flowering bushes, and small, domed windows of Safdie's Hebrew Union College. Nearby, there is the giant conical glass window of his Mercaz Shimshon, a cultural center. Farther back is his grand, horseshoe-shaped Hilton hotel, with its blend of blunt geometries (squares, circles, rounded arches) softened by pale stones, plants, and filtered light. Next to it are visible the Venetian-style enclosed bridges that span the open-air walkways of his condominium complex. To the west of David's Citadel, there are Safdie buildings everywhere, as far as the eye can see. ♦

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

READING MINDS

If a person cannot move, talk, or even blink, is it possible to communicate with his brain?

BY IAN PARKER

One Friday morning last July, Niels Birbaumer, a neuroscientist from the University of Tübingen, in southern Germany, was driven from his hotel in the center of Lima, Peru, to a house protected by a half-dozen armed guards in a gated suburban enclave. He was accompanied by two colleagues—Herta Flor, a professor of neuropsychology, who is his girlfriend, and Thilo Hinterberger, a physicist and computer programmer—and by José Luis Palomino, who runs a company in Lima that distributes communication devices for disabled people. With the assurance of a regular visitor to the house, Palomino led the group through a split-level main room, filled with zebra-skin cushions and potted orchids, to a den decorated with sporting trophies, a stuffed deer's head, and a two-foot bottle of Teacher's whiskey. Sliding smoked-glass doors opened onto an L-shaped swimming pool in a bright, spongy lawn. A game of tennis could be heard from the other side of a tall hedge.

Palomino had set up a makeshift laboratory in one corner of the room. Two desks were placed at right angles: a large television monitor was set up on one, and on the other a computer was connected to a small amplifier. The three visitors from Germany plugged in their own laptop computer, and ran tests on the equipment, while politely accepting snacks brought by shy, silent maids. Esteban Ripamonti Aguad, nicknamed Polo, a jumpy, slightly unkempt man of twenty-five, who is the nephew of the owner of the house, came into the room. "We're very happy to have you here," he told Birbaumer, in Spanish. "We've been counting the days." He spoke quickly, underlining his words with whistles and darting hand movements.

Sometime after midday, there was a whisper—"Mr. Elías is coming!"—and through the glass doors one could see a wheelchair being guided very slowly down a ramp by three nurses and a doctor. Polo's uncle, Elías Musiris Chahín—the wealthy owner of a casino and two fabric factories—sat motionless in the chair. He had a scarf over his mouth, another over his head, and blankets covering his body. He was wearing wraparound dark glasses. On his feet were oversized slippers designed to look like leopard's paws, finished with cloth claws.

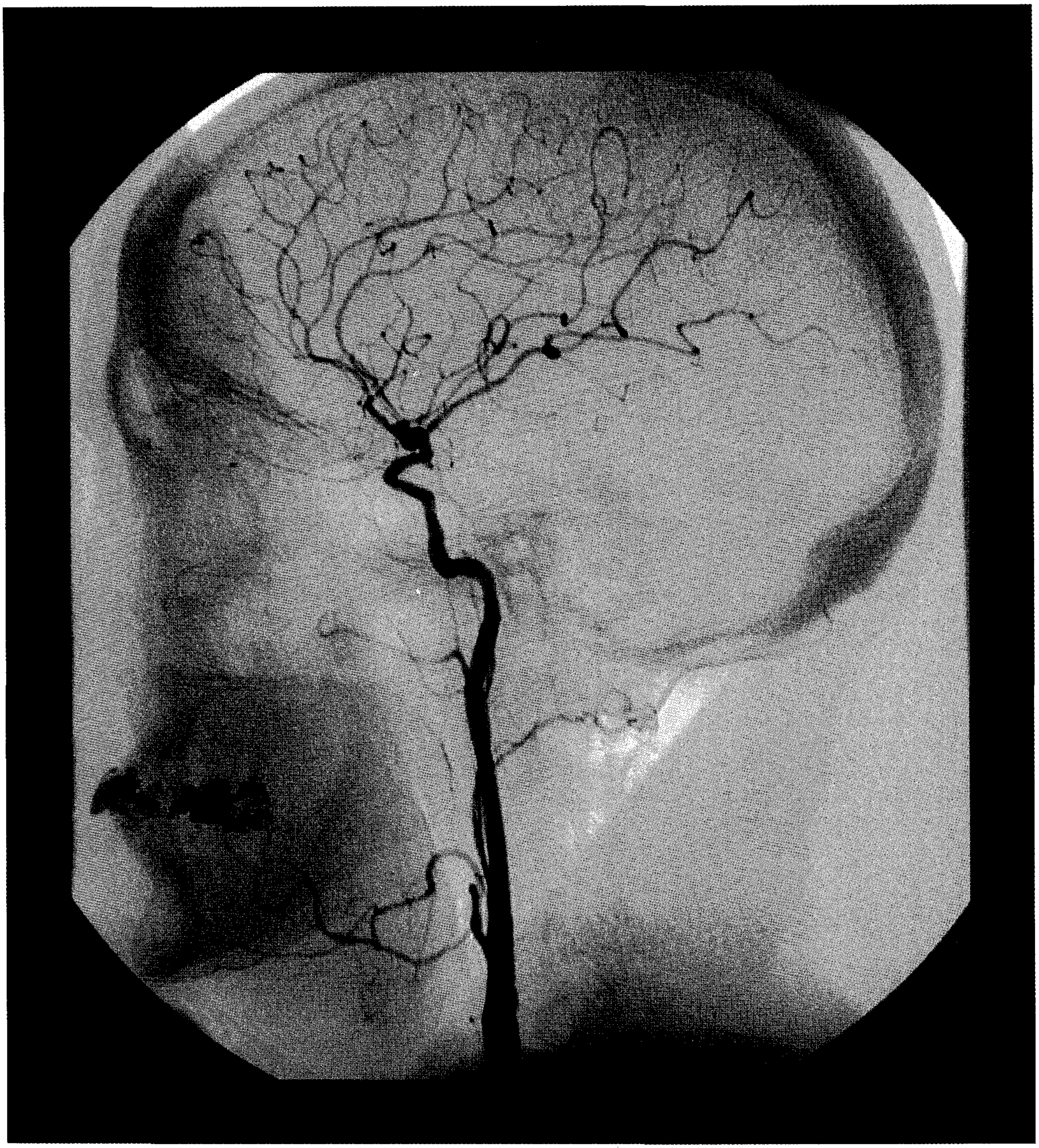
Once Musiris's procession reached the room, a nurse took off his glasses and scarves, and the extent of his paralysis became apparent. He was breathing with a respirator. His left eye was open only because the eyelid was held in place artificially, and the eyeball was stationary. His mouth, which he cannot move, was open very wide, as if at the midpoint of a yawn. Now and then, a nurse delicately used a damp cotton pad to push her patient's lower eyelid upward, to approximate a blink, and cleared saliva from his mouth with a small suction tube.

To use the blunt medical term, Musiris is "locked in": he is unable to communicate with the world, although it is assumed that his senses and his intellect are intact. In 1996, when he was fifty-three years old, Musiris received a diagnosis of a form of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (A.L.S., or Lou Gehrig's disease), which is incurable. Last winter, he completely lost deliberate movement in his eyes, and, with it, the ability to indicate "yes" and "no." His thoughts became unknowable. Nobody fully locked in has ever answered a question.

Musiris's wife, Estrella, joined her husband. She is a tall, broad-shouldered woman in her mid-fifties, with a face dominated by dark-red lips. She made sweeping gestures of welcome, and gave everyone kisses, but she appeared weary in the role of expansive glamour. As Birbaumer later learned, she has been at odds with Musiris's two adult sons from his first marriage, largely over management of his businesses. It was also reported in the Peruvian press that she had argued with her sister-in-law over the origins of Musiris's condition—Estrella charged the sister-in-law with witchcraft, and was in turn accused of poisoning her husband with chemicals used to cultivate orchids. Meanwhile, Ripamonti, who is her nephew, has embraced the role of dutiful son. A few years ago, he moved in and took charge of Musiris's care. Depending on whom you ask, he either filled a vacuum that the dispute with Musiris's sons had created or executed a coup d'état. Last year, he started saying that he could communicate with his uncle by reading how his pulse rate changed. He took questions from Musiris's family and business associates, and returned with answers after some hours in private with his uncle. (In the opinion of Birbaumer, who was never allowed to witness the process, the technique was "impossible"—Musiris was on artificial respiration, so he would not have sufficient control of his heart rate—and Ripamonti was guilty of wishful thinking, at best.)

Birbaumer knows that good science can happen in makeshift settings—it can flex in response to place or the impact of a new experimental thought—but for a moment he looked bemused by his surroundings, and by the size of the crowd now growing in the poolside room. He went over to Musiris, and, in a gentle alternative to a handshake, touched the back of his pale hand with three fingers, and spoke to him quietly in English and in broken Spanish. Musiris was then placed at a point about six feet in front of the TV screen. Birbaumer measured his head, and marked positions on his scalp with a red felt-tip pen. He glued electrodes to the spots, and connected them to the amplifier. "Don't try too hard," he said encouragingly to Musiris, who had

ROBERT LLEWELLYN/CORBIS



A new field of research into the human brain makes an unprecedented proposal: to give thought the power of action.

been introduced to the equipment in the weeks before Birbaumer's arrival. He added, "*Vamos.*"

Birbaumer had flown to Lima to attempt the first-ever conversation with a man fully locked into his body. He is a leading figure in a new field of research seeking unconventional lines of command between human brains and the world beyond them. Brain-Computer Interface (B.C.I.) systems, as they are sometimes known, make an unprecedented proposal: to separate human communication from human muscle, to give thought the power of action. Normally, a brain must call on its body to make something—anything—occur. But B.C.I. imagines a short circuit: a brain wants something to happen, so it happens, without any need for a mouth or a mouse or a remote control.

B.C.I. research has taken two paths: one proposes to implant electrodes in the brain in order to pick up electrical activity there (with one exception—research that began at Emory University, in Atlanta—this has only reached the stage of animal experimentation); the other uses electrodes at the scalp, reading a fuzzier and therefore less useful signal, but without the risks of surgery. The field carries enough promise of dazzling future applications to have created an international network of bad feeling between—and within—these two groups. Birbaumer works in the noninvasive school, as does, most notably, the neuroscientist Jonathan Walpow, who heads the B.C.I. project at the Wadsworth Center of the New York State Department of Health, in Albany. No one doubts the seriousness of Birbaumer's work—he publishes in prestigious journals—but, as he happily acknowledges, its importance lies less at the level of pure scientific breakthrough than in its ability to bring assistance to actual patients. So it's with a little swagger—a defensive arrogance—that Birbaumer calls the equipment that was now hooked up to Musiris's head a Thought Translation Device, or T.T.D.

The nurse who was attending to Musiris's eye stayed at his side, and the rest of the medical team took seats on wicker furniture. Birbaumer sat at the desk. On the monitor in front of Musiris, a white dot began to move across the screen, as if it were tracing a record of seismic activity. Its progress from left to right was steady—an eight-second journey, repeated as soon as it was finished—but it leapt up and down on its vertical axis. Musiris was being shown a part of his electroencephalograph, or EEG, reading, filtered and amplified. The up-and-down movement was a live reflection of his brain activity: a reading of the incessant, faint electrical buzz of a hundred trillion synapses; a pattern that differs if one is awake or asleep, calm or panicked. Each time the dot made its left-right journey, one half of the screen was pink—sometimes the top half, sometimes the bottom, in a random sequence. Musiris's task was to change the electricity of his brain by changing the thoughts inside it, and to use this to control the ball, to keep it in the half of the screen that was pink—the required direction being reinforced by a recorded voice saying "*arriba*" or "*abajo*," up or down. He was being asked to play a crude video game using only his brain.

"To take the light up, maybe try to imagine you're about to fire an arrow—a preparation for action," Birbaumer suggested. "To bring it down, think of something in the future. A projection." Everyone watched the screen. The room was silent except for the whirring noises of Musiris's respiration and waste-removal systems. "*Arriba*," the disembodied voice said, and a light began bouncing its way across the screen. Musiris's audience willed it upward. It stayed up, and Musiris scored a "hit"—that is, the dot spent more than half of its left-to-right journey in the correct half of the screen. A soothing arpeggio chord sounded. There was another "*arriba*," but this time the point of light dipped too much, and there was no rewarding chord. Then "*abajo*," and the light went down—another hit, and so it went on, with almost as many misses as hits. Birbaumer shook his head. A random response would generate a fifty-percent score; Musiris was barely managing even this, so no one could confidently regard the hits as deliberate. But the power of placebo is strong, and when the light did obey the instructions—"*abajo*" or "*arriba*"—it was hard not to read this as an act of furious determination, and to follow the light's unsteady movements as one would a dumbbell above the head of a struggling weight lifter.

The experiment ended within an hour. The medical team wheeled Musiris out of the room. Birbaumer, who, from experience, believes in the importance of reaching a patient before he or she is fully locked in, did not look optimistic. "What you haven't learned when you're young, you haven't learned," he said, quietly. "If you haven't learned this before you're locked in—" He hesitated before adding, "Maybe we've come too late."

Birbaumer and his colleagues were summoned to lunch. Ceviche and squid had been laid out on a long glass table. Musiris sat at one end of the table, his nurses standing behind him, his open mouth covered by the scarf. (He has not been able to eat since 1998; he is fed liquid nutrients, by tube, into his stomach.) At the other end of the table, directly in his line of sight, a television set showed live security-camera images beamed by microwave from his casino, a few miles away. Estrella Musiris pressed food and wine on her dozen or so guests, who—besides Polo, Palomino, and the scientists—now included Eddie Thornberry, who is Musiris's business manager, and two of Estrella's sisters. One of them, Polo's mother, was wearing a jaunty sailor's hat; the other passed around a set of Polaroid photographs that showed her making big wins on slot machines. (They proved that gambling was financially rewarding, she said.)

Midway through lunch, a servant carried in Estrella's new pet monkey, Lorenzo, who was wearing a red cardigan. Lorenzo was introduced to Birbaumer, then made a shrieking dive for the food, and was taken off to the kitchen. I asked a family friend at the

"Someone had to say 'Habeas corpus,' Your Honor—I'm glad it was you."

table what he thought Musiris's first words would be if he regained the ability to communicate. He smiled, and said, "Kill the monkey."

When people ask Niels Birbaumer about the mental life of a person locked into his or her body, he often mentions a favorite book, Dalton Trumbo's 1939 novel, "Johnny Got His Gun," which is narrated by an American soldier who wakes up in a hospital bed to discover that his legs, arms, and face have been blown off. The soldier is deaf, dumb, and blind. "He was a dead man with a mind that could still think," Trumbo writes. After several years, the soldier comes to realize that by nodding his head he can tap out messages in Morse code. When military commanders are brought to his bed to hear what he has to say, he asks to become a travelling exhibit, demonstrating the ugliness of war. They reject the idea. They sedate him and leave him. "He was the perfect picture of the future and they were afraid to let anyone see what the future was like."

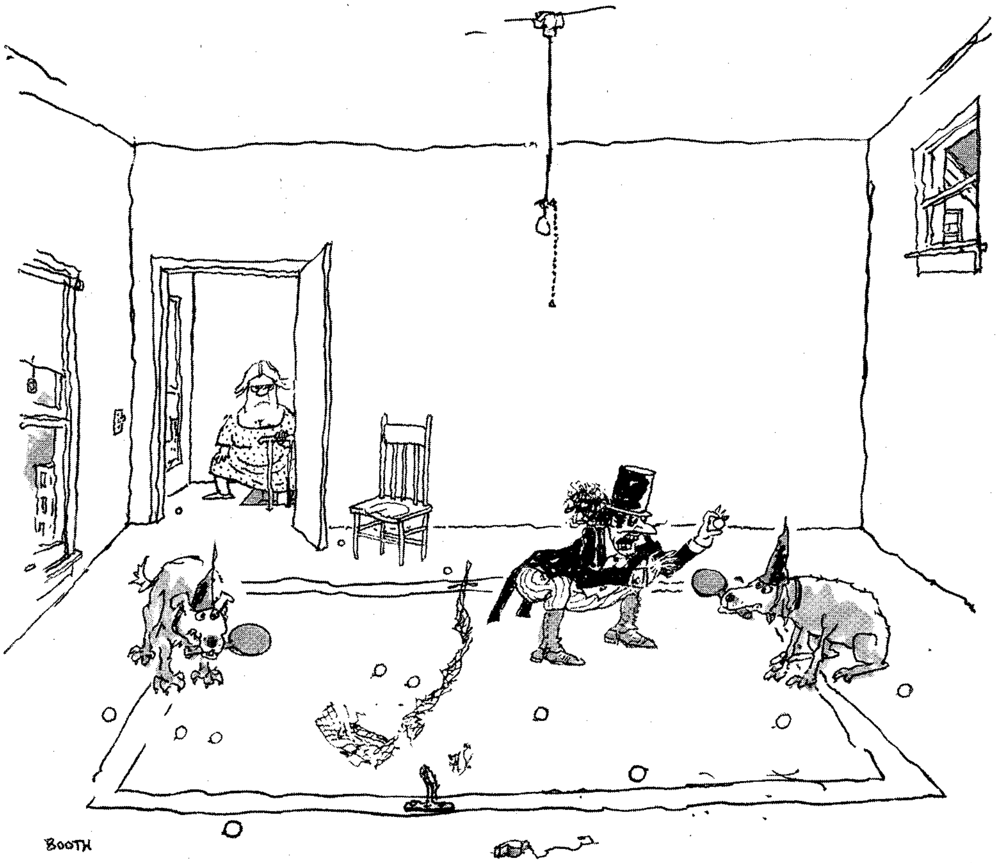
Birbaumer finds in the locked-in syndrome a kind of revolutionary model, with patients oppressed—as he sees it—by neurologists who encourage them to suppose that life on artificial respiration is unlivable; and, on occasion, by family members who discover the advantages of a silent and compliant relative ("the perfect spouse!" he says). He is a liberator, giving speech to the silenced. But Birbaumer is also sometimes mesmerized by the idea of a life of contemplation. "There are days when I think, Oh, I could not stand being locked in," he told me last summer, shortly before he flew to Peru. "And then other days when, well, I imagine just being able to think, do nothing but think."

We were in Tübingen, where he runs the university's department of medical psychology. The window of his third-floor office looks past steeply gabled houses toward the River Neckar, where tourists were being punted upstream and down in long, flat boats. Birbaumer, who prefers more dynamic surroundings, and whose own volubility contrasts with the silence of his patients, sat slouched in an armchair, and frequently answered a tiny cell phone in his breast pocket, speaking in German, Italian, and English. There was some sighing and shrugging. Birbaumer, a slight, dark, well-dressed man of fifty-seven, his hair turning gray, devotes much of his day to exasperation at one thing or another: his allegedly bland, overambitious Ph.D. students; the "bullshit" research being done in his field; the "idiots" in Europe and the United States who deny him funding. He is brusque but good company.

"This next blues is about the 5:37 to Scarsdale, and how it's frequently late, and crowded."

In Germany, Birbaumer is a well-known public intellectual who contributes—in an amused, reckless, and sometimes cutting way—to television debates on social and medical matters. His political stance points to a background in the student upheavals of 1968; born in Czechoslovakia and brought up in Austria, Birbaumer is a graduate in psychology from the University of Vienna, and was a professor there until he was fired for agitating against the teaching of an allegedly reactionary senior colleague. He moved into Germany's wrecked postwar scientific community, and was promoted quickly (some think too quickly), becoming a full professor of psychology at Tübingen at the age of twenty-nine. He has been married to the same woman twice, finally separating from her in 1991, and he has an adult son from another relationship. Twelve years ago, he met Herta Flor, who is a leading researcher in the study of pain at the University of Heidelberg. (Her recent experiments showed that a patient's sense of pain can increase threefold when his or her spouse is in the room.) Today, he spends weekdays in Tübingen, then, each weekend, he and Flor drive to a house in northern Italy, where they grow olives and keep pigs. He is a member of what used to be called the Italian Communist Party.

Birbaumer's Ph.D. thesis described how the brains of blind people make structural compensation for the loss of sight; he later studied the mental activity of musicians at the moment before they play a note. From early in his career, he has worked with the brain waves known as slow cortical potentials (S.C.P.s). In the range of signals that make up the human EEG, S.C.P.s are unusual for occurring over a period of seconds, rather than milliseconds, and they tend to accompany all kinds of human activity; they are not linked to particular motions or emotions. An S.C.P. reading is a fairly reliable indication of general brain business. In work that led to Birbaumer's winning a Leibniz Prize—Germany's best-endowed research award—in 1995, he trained epileptics to fend off an impending seizure by adjusting their S.C.P.s. Birbaumer might have called this process



"You hit the ball—that's ping. Your opponent hits the ball—that's pong! Ping-Pong! Ping-Pong! Ping-Pong!"

"biofeedback" had the word not been tainted in the nineteen-sixties and seventies by an academic scandal involving the falsification of data, and by "white-robed meditation crap," as he puts it. ("I now call it 'physiological regulation,' " Birbaumer told me. "With this, you impress the medical profession, and the psychologists don't know what you mean. So you don't get into any trouble.") Using feedback carried from electrodes on the scalp, shown in a visual display—a ball rising and falling on a computer monitor—fifty epileptic subjects, all of whom were unresponsive to drug treatments, learned over the course of thirty-five sessions how to send their brains into a state of S.C.P. "positivity." When a seizure loomed, they would alter their S.C.P.s. They could think their way out of danger. Birbaumer found that, on average, over the following months, his patients were able to reduce the frequency of their seizures by half; about a third stopped having seizures altogether.

In the late nineteen-eighties and early nineties, the field of B.C.I. was beginning to emerge in Europe and the United States—driven in part by cheap, powerful computers, and by a louder lobby for disabled people. (Much of the neuroscientific knowledge had been in place for a while: electrical brain signals were discovered in 1875, and the human EEG was first recorded in 1929.) It was clear to Birbaumer—and others—that if one could change one's S.C.P. reading at will, as his epileptics had done, and if this change could be picked up at the scalp efficiently, and amplified, then this technology might serve as a communication device for people with severe disabilities. The money awarded with the Leibniz Prize—$1.5 million—gave Birbaumer an opportunity to start a new experiment. In 1995, he began training paralyzed people to write with their brains.

The locked-in state can be mistaken for a coma, and a coma can be mistaken for a locked-in state. A locked-in diagnosis (the term was first used in 1966 by the American neurologists Jerome Posner and Fred Plum) means that although a person has been abandoned by his or her body, the brain still functions. The most clear evidence for this is usually some residual voluntary eye movement, a deliberate response to "Blink if you hear me." A comatose patient does not blink; in tests, locked-in patients have responded with eye movements that show they have suffered no significant loss of language, memory, or intellectual function. In two rare cases of deliberate total self-paralysis—unconnected experiments in the mid-nineteen-forties to test the possible usefulness of muscle relaxants in surgery—scientists in London and Salt Lake City found that when briefly locked in they could see clearly (if someone pulled up one of their eyelids), hear, feel the pain of pinpricks or adhesive strips pulled from their skin, and experience terror ("I felt I was drowning in my own saliva," one later reported).

A French magazine editor, Jean-Dominique Bauby, was almost fully locked in after a stroke in 1995, and used his left eyelid to dictate a wry memoir, "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly," published just before his death, in 1997. "I have known gentler awakenings," he wrote. "When I came to that late-January morning, the hospital ophthalmologist was leaning over me and sewing my right eyelid shut with a needle and thread." The book explains the method of its composition. An assistant at Bauby's hospital bedside would run through the alphabet—rearranged according to the frequency of each letter's use in French—and Bauby would blink at the letter he needed, and so describe swooping mental journeys he took to escape from his body:

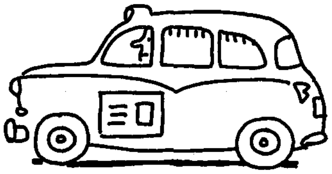
> I reshoot the close-ups for "Touch of Evil." Down at the beach, I rework the dolly shots for "Stagecoach," and offshore I recreate the storm rocking the smugglers of "Moonfleet." . . . I am the hero of Godard's "Pierrot le Fou," my face smeared blue, a garland of dynamite sticks encircling my head.

According to the medical literature (which includes a description of an American man who, at the time of his death, in 1990, had been locked in for twenty-seven years), the syndrome has at times been induced by a brain tumor, by alcohol abuse, and by a visit to a chiropractor after a car accident. But it is most commonly associated with brain-stem strokes (as in Bauby's case), extreme spinal-cord injuries, and neurological diseases like A.L.S. As a result of recent medical progress—in particular, refinements in methods of artificial respiration—the locked-in population is now growing. There are no statistics, but Birbaumer guesses that there are twice as many locked-in patients in the world as there were ten years ago: he estimates that there are perhaps ten thousand in Germany and twenty-five thousand in the United States. A small proportion of them, perhaps one or two per cent, have survived beyond any lingering eye movement (and beyond any slight sphincter movement, which is often the last control to be lost), to reach a place of complete separation from the world. Among them is Elías Musiris.

The son of Palestinian immigrants, Musiris made his fortune in acrylic and cotton cloth. "He was a successful man, handsome, very sexy," Estrella Musiris told me. "You remember the actor Omar Sharif? This man, he was Omar Sharif." He married his first wife in the late nineteen-sixties. They had two sons, Arturo and Javier, and eventually divorced. He met Estrella in the eighties, but, because his divorce was not final, they did not marry until just before he became ill. "It was love at first sight," she says. "True love, to the end." She and Musiris would sometimes fly to Las Vegas for the weekend. He loved gambling and horse racing. He owned a stable of horses he called Jet Set, and was elected the director of the Jockey Club of Peru. On the walls of a back room in his house, a group of framed photographs show Musiris at the track over two decades, wearing binoculars around his neck, sometimes flanked by friends in dark glasses and dark shirts, posing with a cup or with a winning horse. Over the years, a little paunch appears under his well-cut jackets, a thin mustache comes and goes. His sons grow up from neat boys in shirts and ties to handsome, privileged teen-agers in flared trousers. In later photographs, Estrella is at his side, always tilting her head in a wistful way.

In 1996, when Musiris's A.L.S. was diagnosed, he was optimistic that a treatment might be developed in time to help him; he visited at least ten specialists in the United States. Many A.L.S. patients experience a long period of slowly worsening symptoms, but the disease ambushed Musiris. Within a year, he could no longer walk or talk, and he was already on artificial respiration when, in 1997, he was introduced to José Luis Palomino. Then in his mid-thirties, Palomino was a former Navy intelligence officer who had once been active in the government's bloody struggle against the Shining Path guerrilla movement. After a period of self-imposed exile, he returned to Peru, working first as a security consultant and then as a computer-systems adviser specializing in tools for paralyzed people. When they met, Musiris was communicating with an infrared device fixed to his head: by moving his neck, he could direct a point of light on a grid of letters in front of him. "He was losing movement," Palomino told me, remembering his first meetings with Musiris. "I was the only person who told Mr. Elías that there was a strong possibility he would be locked in." Musiris brushed his concerns aside. "He'd say, 'Have another coffee, have a dessert.'"

Palomino set up a system incorporating a beam of infrared light pointed at Musiris's chin, and EZ Keys, a word-prediction program that facilitates typing with a single movement. Then his chin movement became unreliable, and Palomino linked EZ Keys to Musiris's static charge, which he could adjust by touching his teeth together. This control was also soon lost. By the end of 2000, Musiris was able to communicate only by glancing to the left or the right. Palomino says that, using this method, "he told me, 'Keep up the communication, whatever it costs. Buy everything. I will try everything.'"



By the beginning of 2001, it was hard to make sense of Musiris's eye movements. By the end of the year, he was fully locked in. After reading about Birbaumer on the Internet, Palomino contacted him by e-mail, and last April he and Ripamonti flew to Tübingen for a meeting. Birbaumer is emphatically not in the business of marketing his T.T.D.—he has a leftist's disregard for commerce—but he was struck by Palomino's competence, and was willing to give him a copy of his software, help him buy the hardware, and show him how he was using the combination with patients.

Palomino began training with Musiris, and Birbaumer studied his initial results. They were not spectacular, but because there was some sign of response (and because Birbaumer's brother lives in Paraguay) he agreed to spend three weeks with Musiris in Lima, accepting expenses but no fee. "It's a chance to communicate with a real locked-in patient," he said. "Maybe."

When I first met Niels Birbaumer, in 1999, he was four years into the B.C.I. experiment, and seemed confident: he had made progress with several patients at different stages of paralysis, and had recently published an article in the journal *Nature* about his success with Hans-Peter Salzmann, a former lawyer in his forties who had been disabled by A.L.S. Salzmann lives in Stuttgart, about half an hour north of Tübingen. Birbaumer met him in 1996, when he was already paralyzed to the point where he controlled only a single muscle under his left eye; with this, he had a Bauby-like means of communication. Birbaumer had found his patient to be smart, methodical, and a little formal—"Prussian," as he puts it. (Even today, Salzmann, who can still communicate with his face muscle, has never used the more familiar form of "you"—*du*—with Birbaumer.)

Some people find it easier than others to influence their EEG; Birbaumer has discovered no correlation with intelligence or age (although depressives seem to do better than average). Barbara Wilhelm, a research student in Birbaumer's department, told me that she regularly scores a hundred per cent with her

S.C.P.s. "To make the ball go up, I think of the 'glory of love,'" she said, with a faint blush. "I just think of that phrase. And, to make it go down, I think of peace and calm, of peace and freedom—the end of the Arab-Israeli conflict." Salzmann, a former athlete, made the ball rise by imagining himself crouched on the starting line of a race. Salzmann did not find it easy, but, over time, he improved his technique; he was persistent and highly motivated, and after a year or so he had begun to reach scores of seventy per cent. At this level, he could advance to the next, crucial, stage: a spelling program written in Birbaumer's department. When combined with a monitor, electrodes, and an amplifier, this constituted the T.T.D. Salzmann saw a screen with half of the alphabet above the horizontal line. Did he want one of these letters? Yes or no? If yes, he had to send the ball up. If he sent the ball down, the other half of the alphabet would appear. Whichever letters were chosen, they would split again into two, and Salzmann would choose again, and so on until he had reduced the alphabet to a single letter, a process that usually took several minutes. (There was a third screen at each stage, where he could choose to move back to correct an error.)

For the first months, Salzmann was asked to reproduce letters, or strings of letters, given to him by his trainers. Then came the point when he was invited to spell on his own. Andrea Kübler, a research student then working with Salzmann, once described to me a landmark day in 1997. Salzmann produced the letter "A," then "B," "and then 'R.' And I thought he'd been trying to write *aber*—'but'—or *abend*—'evening'—and he'd written the wrong letter, and hadn't managed to delete it." But then he produced "A" and "K." Relatively speaking, the word spilled out of him: "ABRAKADABRA." Soon afterward, Salzmann wrote a letter to Birbaumer thanking him for his work and inviting him to a party. The letter was printed in *Nature*.

I visited Salzmann a few years ago, and again last July. He lives in a ground-floor apartment in a modern building, and he is assisted at all hours by nurses and by young people who have chosen to do community service rather than enter the military. In a sunny office next to his living room, he was sitting at an angle of about forty-five degrees in a wheelchair, with his head propped up straight; his hands were in his lap. Tubes supplied him with air and food. There was a novel by Elias Canetti on a stand and on the wall a black-and-white photograph of Salzmann, taken years before, at a picnic in a field of high grass. He gave me a demonstration of a new program developed by his Tübingen researchers: he could now surf the Internet (or at least a pre-selected part of it) using his brain. I watched him visit the site for C. H. Beck, a legal publishing house, and then choose, from the home page of the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, a story about the difficulties facing Rudolf Scharping, who was then the German defense minister.

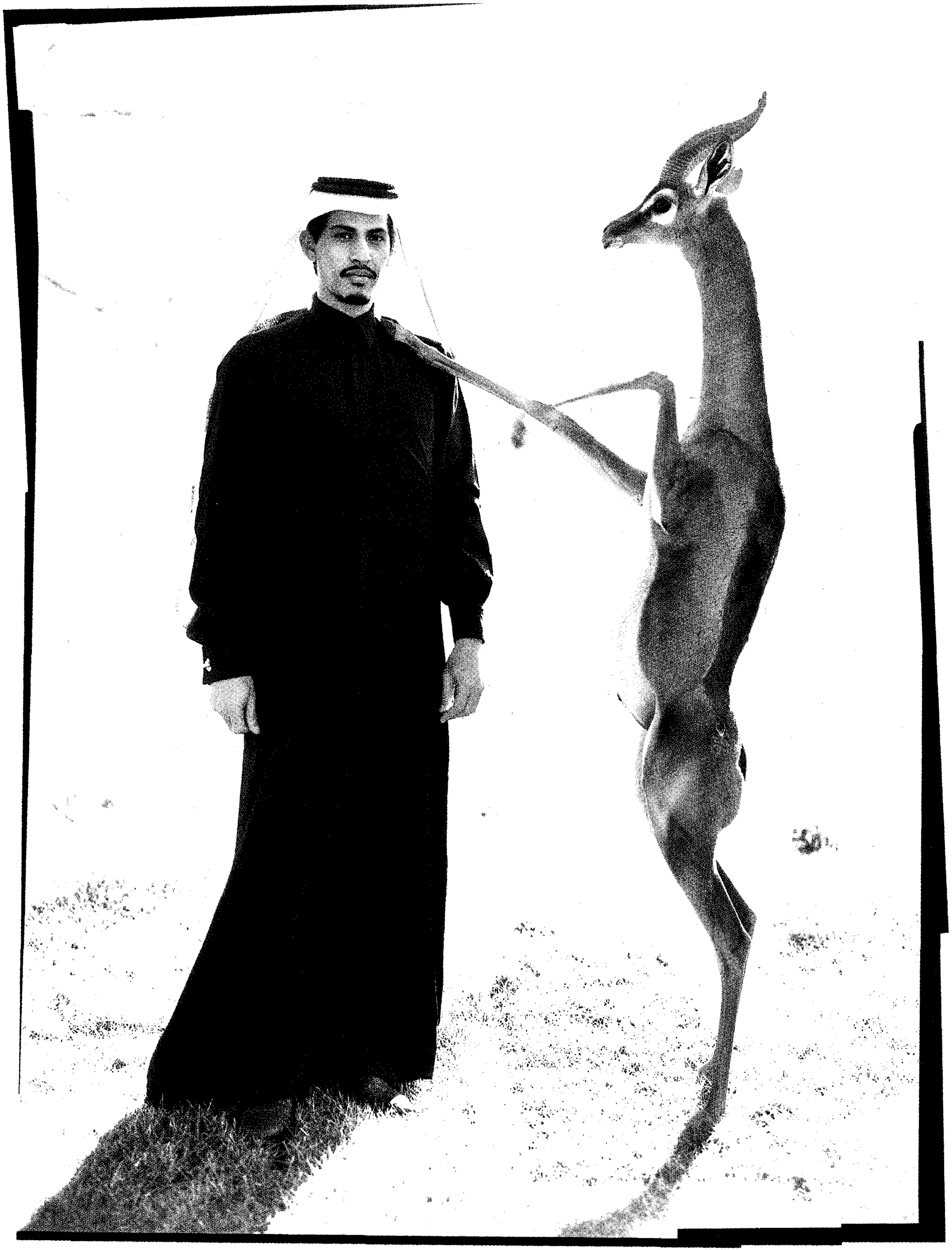
Salzmann is still able to make himself understood without B.C.I., if an experienced interpreter looks directly at him from a few inches away, offering him letters. Through a Tübingen research student, Ahmed Karim, Salzmann told me that he was glad of the warm weather and of the chance he had that morning to sit outside with his nurses. He told me that his habits of mind had not changed with his illness, but he added, "I have a more vivid imagination when I write, and I think that in general I've become more attentive. I concentrate and I try to memorize more." He said that Bauby's description of the locked-in state corresponded to his own experience, although he dislikes the phrase. "As long as I can express myself, I'm not locked in," he said.

A few days later, however, when I saw Birbaumer, he seemed to have lost some of his confidence in the experiment. "We're not moving," he said. "Well, we're moving, but we're not moving fast. To make substantial progress, which I think we could do, I would need about ten times the money." In part, his problem lies with the success of the "monkey guys"—his term of half-affectionate disregard for researchers on the invasive side of B.C.I., those who work with implanted electrodes that pick up the brain's actual electrical instructions to the body, rather than reading, at the scalp, the byproduct of those instructions.

At a B.C.I. conference held last year in Rensselaerville, New York, a researcher of the invasive school was overheard comparing the difference between his research and noninvasive research to jet airplanes and hot-air balloons. A balloon was inarguably colorful and charming, and it worked, but to reach a conference one might prefer a 747. Animal experimenters at Duke University and at Brown University, among other places, are perhaps closer to science's cutting edge than Birbaumer is, and they are more ready to think beyond communication devices to systems of brain-controlled motion. Some have formed private companies, and some receive defense funding. ("What the military really wants is a remote-controlled soldier," Birbaumer says.)

Birbaumer takes a kind of moral strength from working with people—a dozen so far—who have immediate communication needs, rather than working with animals, but he is happy to concede that the monkey researchers have begun to produce astonishing results. They have found, for instance, that one can know the intention of a brain by keeping track of surprisingly few of its billions of neurons. At Duke University, the Brazilian-born neuroscientist Miguel Nicolelis, who has some of Birbaumer's flamboyant style—his Web site plays "Bim Bom," "Girl from Ipanema," and other Joao Gilberto hits—used techniques developed with John Chapin, now at the State University of New York Health Science Center, to implant hundreds of Teflon-coated microwires, bundled together in groups, into the brains of two owl monkeys, in areas of the cortex known to be associated with motor function. A computer algorithm combined the information from the electrodes. Nicolelis trained the monkeys to make particular arm movements, and, over two years, he read and recorded patterns of neuronal firing associated with those movements. He was identifying the neuronal signature of a particular monkey gesture. Two years ago, he was able to use a signal taken directly from the animal's cortex to make a robotic arm simultaneously replicate the monkey's actual arm movement. (And, for good measure, the signal was sent across the Internet, to make a robotic arm move at M.I.T., six hundred miles away.)

Last year, at Brown University, a team lead by John Donoghue, the chairman of the Department of Neuroscience, re-

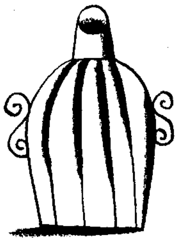


PORTRAIT BY RICHARD AVEDON *Sheikh Saud Al-Thani, of Qatar, where the U.S. military has set up a command headquarters, is a staunch protector of endangered species and a supporter of the arts.*

ported something similar: a monkey first learned to use a joystick to play a video game, while his keepers similarly built up a key—a code book—linking neuronal activity with various actions. Then the joystick was disconnected from the computer. The monkey continued to play the game using only his brain.

The clearer signals extracted from the brain in these experiments, and others similar to them, may turn out to be suited to the control of wheelchairs or limbs—or even devices of "neurological augmentation" for able-bodied people: speed typing, for example. "Exciting things are going to happen in the next couple of years," Donoghue told me. "We're trying to re-create the nervous system, and I've been shocked how easy it is. You know, it almost seems too good to be true. You have these nights—'How is it so easy to get these ideas out of the brain from such small numbers of neurons?' "

Barry Dworkin, a leading neuroscientist and psychologist at Penn State's Hershey Medical Center, says, "There's a technical difference, not a categorical difference, between what Nicolelis and Birbaumer are doing. This is all about information—about how much information you can extract. No doubt the theoretical capacity of electrodes surgically implanted in the brain is vastly greater than Birbaumer's slow potentials, but the electrodes are highly invasive. And it is actually quite hard to extract clean signals from them, and to transform them into real-time movement schemes." He adds, "Our natural speech and motor apparatus works so well it's hard to see the applications for able-bodied people, even with a vastly improved technology. I suppose you could wire people's brains together instead of making them meet in a committee room. That might save time. At the moment, for disabled people, there's a lot to be said for Birbaumer's method, if it works. It's not invasive and these people are pretty fragile. Of course, you'll never be able to use it to fly an F-16."



The invasive-technique scientists may have drawn attention and research grants away from Birbaumer, but something else was feeding into his restlessness last summer. It was the nagging possibility that, whatever else he would achieve with the T.T.D., he might never use it to communicate with people fully locked in their bodies. The system has not been proved in the environment where it is most needed. Hans-Peter Salzmann still uses his facial muscles for everyday talk: B.C.I. is a secondary tool, for private letters and e-mails generated over weeks and months—a pocket of autonomy in a life that is otherwise entirely collaborative.

Meanwhile, Birbaumer's few fully locked-in subjects—those who have no residual facial movement—remained silent. Among them was a woman paralyzed by Guillain-Barré syndrome, a rare neurological condition. A coma test showed that she was "still with us," Birbaumer said—her EEG showed that she took notice, for example, of auditory stimuli—and she seemed at first to be responsive to training, but "now we've seen nothing for more than a year." A patient with hereditary A.L.S. had begun training well before he became locked in, but then his wife left him, and he was moved into a nursing home. Now fully locked in, he rarely has visitors; his son, who has a fifty-per-cent risk of inheriting the disease, finds it hard to be with him. The patient has stopped responding. "He doesn't want to communicate," Birbaumer said. "He doesn't answer me. I asked him if he wanted to live or not to live. I said, 'You can tell me.' I always say to my patients, 'If you don't want to live, and you have good reasons, I will help you.' But he never said that."

Was it possible that the loss of one's last faint muscle movement somehow eliminated the will to be heard? Birbaumer instinctively resists this idea. He was always upbeat about the potential quality of life of people who are unable to move, and contemptuous of the assumption made by some neurologists that when a patient decides to live beyond the point of artificial respiration he or she enters a zone of hopeless despair. Birbaumer's reading of the literature, and his own research, has suggested to him something more positive. A study done in his department compared the mental life of eighty A.L.S. patients at various stages of the disease, eighty people who had been given a diagnosis of clinical depression, and a sample of those whom Birbaumer calls, with a touch of comic disparagement, "normals." "We found that the A.L.S. patients are significantly more depressed than the normals, but they're significantly less depressed than the depressed; and they're all within the normal range." So, in his opinion, the usual neurological assumption is "just plain bullshit," he said.

But this leaves aside a more focussed question about the mental life of those few people who are, like Elías Musiris, completely locked in. "I was once much more secure in the idea that these people really think normally and their inner life is intact," Birbaumer said. "Now I'm not sure."

He had to leave to give a lecture, but, before he went, he said, "You can make yourself die. There are data on that. You can shut down your organism and kill yourself by just doing nothing. In hopeless situations, the immune system falls apart, then you die of an opportunistic disease. You give up."

The Atlantic City casino occupies the first three floors of a gray office building at a key intersection in the prosperous but not pretty Lima neighborhood of Miraflores. When I visited late one night in July, most of the customers were well-dressed middle-aged women; the slot machines produced a dense symphonic din. On a second-floor mezzanine, a little bar had been built underneath a staircase, and the wall behind it was studded with pinpoints of light to resemble a night sky. Elías Musiris was sitting in the dim light, his wheelchair facing a TV monitor that showed security-camera images of the casino, just as in his dining room at home. Estrella was with him. A heartbeat monitor clipped to his earlobe glowed green.

As a healthy man, Musiris spent every night at his casino. He still arrives every evening before midnight, and leaves every morning at dawn. Then he sleeps—the only sign of this is that his eyes move back a little in their sockets—and a nurse watches his face constantly, scanning for signs of crisis. Sometime after midday, he is put into his wheelchair and taken to the dining room. Twice a week, he is washed, and he has a daily massage. A doctor is always on hand. Polo asks questions using his pulse system, and the nurses read to him from the morning newspaper. Then, at night, he is driven again to the casino. "He said he wanted to go to the casino, and for everything to stay the same," Estrella said, when I sat with them. A friend of Musiris's—a fellow textile businessman—came by and kissed him on the forehead. Polo dashed about, now and then changing the image on Musiris's TV screen. I watched him zoom in tightly on a machine where casino guests were making bets on a computer-generated horse race. Bright animated horses filled Musiris's screen: a silent, security-camera image of a cartoon representation of his favorite sport.

"On the other hand, their accounting procedures are impeccable."

Birbaumer's hotel was directly across the street from the casino. The morning after his first session with Musiris, Birbaumer was sitting in the hotel lobby with José Luis Palomino. Birbaumer describes himself as a behaviorist—enjoying the slight datedness of the label—and he makes respectful reference to the work of the late B. F. Skinner, who trained pigeons to peck at a colored plastic disk by rewarding, first, any tiny accidental movement toward the disk, then any closer movement, then actual contact. Skinner called it "shaping"—where a desired form of behavior, even one well outside an animal's usual repertoire, can be fashioned out of a series of small steps taken in the right direction.

"The important part is going to be psychological," Birbaumer said. "The reward. We need maximum reward. Elías is a thinking, feeling person." He glanced across the street. "Can you imagine someone saying, 'If you win on the slot machine, we'll give you the money tomorrow'? We can't just say, 'You will communicate in the future.' That's not enough." (Birbaumer lobbied in his university department for using "sexual reinforcers"—sexual imagery or visits from prostitutes—as a form of "intermittent rewarding stimulus" for some of his patients, who are mostly male. He was voted down by colleagues.)

He and Palomino did not doubt that Musiris had understood them. In a passive "auditory oddball" test, a series of beeps on one note had been played to Musiris, then a beep on another, lower, note. This was repeated. According to his EEG reading, he had registered the different beep, repeatedly, meaning that he had short-term memory and some ability to notice changes in his environment—which is not always true of A.L.S. patients. Another test was also positive.

For Birbaumer and Palomino, then, the issue was will, not skill. How could Musiris be motivated? How could his behavior be "shaped"? "Could we try this?" Palomino asked. He clapped his hands. "Applause. He's an Arab. He likes to have people around him."

"The problem is, human reinforcement might be distracting," said Birbaumer, who had disliked how busy the room had been the previous day. "I was thinking, What's important to him? And it's maybe business. With Salzmann, his control is over us, and the material he keeps secret from us. That's what keeps him alive. We have to think of something that Musiris can take control over."

Back at the house, Musiris was brought into the poolside room and the electrodes were again fixed to his head. "*En sus marcas, listos, ya!*" Palomino said: ready, set, go. The ball of light moved across the screen. To everyone's surprise, Musiris scored a string of hits. The ball seemed to have a new lightness. Musiris managed sixteen hits out of twenty, and the room burst into applause. Polo punched the air with his fist.

But in a trial a few minutes later Musiris scored only seven out of twenty. The following evening, this pattern was repeated: early in the session, he did well, and for a moment he seemed to reveal himself—he had a new, fuller presence in the room. But then he faded, pulled away from his audience by low scores.

Birbaumer had brought a videotape from Germany on which Salzmann was seen slowly spelling out "ELÍAS, U CAN DO IT" with the T.T.D.—but Birbaumer did not quite share Salzmann's confidence. Musiris was responding better than any other fully locked-in patient Birbaumer had seen. But until Musiris could consistently move the light into the correct half of the screen with at least seventy-five-per-cent accuracy, there would be little point promoting him to the letter-selection program used by Salzmann: the error rate would undermine the system and perhaps crush Musiris's morale.

Daily practice would surely improve the patient's average, but Birbaumer

"Just when you think you have nothing more to give, you have to work until eight."

would be in Lima for only three weeks. So while Musiris continued to train in the usual way, with the eventual goal of creating words, Birbaumer and his colleagues began to improvise a simpler system inspired by work he had done years before on lie detection. ("I hated it for ethical reasons, but it was interesting scientifically," he told me.) Musiris would be read a question or a statement. If he sent the ball up, he would be responding "yes"; if he sent the ball down, he would be saying "no." This would be reinforced by a recorded voice saying "*sí, sí, sí, sí*" when the ball was above the line, and "*no, no, no, no*" when below. (Birbaumer was increasingly persuaded that Musiris was not seeing clearly, if at all.) As with lie detectors, Musiris would be asked the same thing repeatedly, in both a positive and a negative form: both "I want to go to the casino" and "I don't want to go to the casino." These would be intermixed with control sentences to which the correct response was known: "Lima is the capital of Peru"; "Lima is not the capital of Peru." One could, in theory, spell this way, at an absurdly slow pace. But the system's value was as a form of actual, if crude, communication, and therefore an encouragement. A simple yes-no system would forgive a very modest hit rate. Even a faint bias would become statistically persuasive—statistically unassailable, eventually—given enough repetition. "We can tell his intent from sixty per cent," Birbaumer said. If a tossed coin lands heads up six times out of ten just once, that says nothing; if it happens for a week, then something has been done to the coin—a bias has been proved.

Birbaumer badgered the family for questions that would engage Musiris. Birbaumer also wrote his own list. Although he was keen to ask a question about Elías's feelings for Estrella, he could not see how to express the negative without causing offense: "I love my wife. I hate my wife." "We have to mix the psychology and the mathematics," Birbaumer said. This process of fusion was wearying: he and Herta Flor were also trying to adjust the system to reward even ambiguous responses—and to allow for the fact that Musiris found it easier to take the ball up than down. This put them in frequent conflict with Thilo Hinterberger, who did not want to introduce imprecision into his computer program. In daily arguments over this question, Hinterberger turned from cool calm to red-faced fury in seconds, shouting, "I know what I'm doing!"

For all the conflict, Birbaumer was also stimulated. "I don't usually follow these patients so closely," he said. "You know, I do the business, I get the money, I kick the young people"—his research students—"in the ass, that's my job. I never sit here like this. I don't have time. We should do it like this always. That's the right way to proceed in science. But it's not what's allowed by the system."

On Monday, Birbaumer's fourth day in Lima, they started asking Musiris the yes-or-no questions. "Do you like business?" a recorded voice said. Musiris replied, "*Sí, sí, sí, no, no, sí, sí, sí*"—the ball mostly stayed above the line. "Do you not like business?" "*No, sí, no, no, no, no, no.*" The question was asked six times, three times in each form. He gave the same answer five times. Then he was asked another six times: now he liked business three times. Then: "Do you like racehorses? Do you not like racehorses?" "Is your manager Eddie Thornberry?" "Do you like going to the casino?" "Should the casino have two new roulette tables?" At Birbaumer's suggestion, Estrella had taken a place by her husband's side, from where she was saying "*Muy bien, muy bien,*" and blowing him kisses.

Despite the reinforcement—the kisses, the "*sí, sí, sí, sí,*" the promise of immediate communication—Musiris's percentages did not show a dramatic rise, and again he was being dragged into the shadows of poor percentages, perhaps by tiredness. But with the new system repetition could squeeze meaning out of a hint. The casino questions, in particular, had begun to generate fairly reliable answers. If one accepted the math, then Musiris did want to go to the casino; and they should buy the new tables.

Musiris left for his night at the Atlantic City. Had there been communication? "We think so, but it's very rudimentary," Birbaumer said. He had seen a breakthrough, of sorts—a dialogue with a fully locked-in patient—but he could not be described as upbeat. "We're getting probabilities, but it's not what people like. People don't like statistics." He frowned and shrugged.

Every evening, Musiris came to the den to train. After a week, the yes-or-no system had drawn answers from him that, through repetition, had reached a statistical safety level of more than ninety per cent. Some questions about his domestic arrangements never seemed to engage him: "Do you want to sleep?" "Do you want to stay in this room?" But questions about business reached a level of statistical certainty. "Should we invest in a new textile-dyeing system?" Thornberry asked him. Musiris said "yes," emphatically. "May we sell the old slot machines?" Thornberry wanted to sell them, but Musiris, who was asked more than fifty times, said "no" repeatedly. Thornberry said he would respect that decision. Musiris was beginning to have a deliberate impact on the world without moving a muscle.

He continued to train toward the goal of letter selection. At the end of the second week, Birbaumer presented him with a version of Salzmann's spelling program where the alphabet had been reduced to a handful of letters. Birbaumer gave him a spelling task—two words to copy—but Musiris struggled. At one o'clock in the morning, he had produced nothing. Birbaumer came close to him, and said, "If you spell this correctly now, then you can go to the casino." Over the next twenty minutes, without making an error, Musiris selected "E," "L," "I"—until he had spelled out "ELÍAS MUSIRIS." His family shouted, danced, and kissed one another. "He wrote his own name. That was incredible," Birbaumer later remembered. "The family went crazy."

I telephoned Birbaumer a few weeks after he had flown home to Tübingen. "I'm pessimistic about getting him to do real free spelling, using the whole alphabet, and choosing his own words," he said. "But we did communicate with him, and we still are communicating. And I'm more convinced than I was before that the T.T.D. can be useful for people who are completely locked in." Birbaumer was thinking about future publication. Musiris was continuing to train with Palomino, who was e-mailing data to Germany each day, although the experiment had been interrupted for several weeks when Lorenzo, Estrella's pet monkey, damaged the amplifier. Lorenzo was now living with neighbors.

While newly optimistic about the possibility of some form of communication with fully locked-in people, Birbaumer had revised his sense of the mental lives of these patients. "I have no data on this—it's completely subjective—but now I think that when you become locked in you also partially lock yourself in cognitively," he said. Hans-Peter Salzmann will avoid it, perhaps, by training throughout the period during which he becomes fully locked in—if that is his fate. But Musiris seemed partially marooned. "Maybe after a while you stop thinking in particular areas," Birbaumer said. "Probably a lot of your inner life becomes empty, and you have some residual modules in your brain. In Elías's case, let's call them the casino module, the factory module, the Estrella module, which can be activated from time to time, but most of the time you're in a locked-in state mentally—there's nothing going on in your head anymore. That was my impression with him. In most situations he had just stopped thinking. But this is nothing more than a clinical impression. And you know what that's worth—nothing." He laughed.

Birbaumer was once able to think of his work as an act of subversion; he would introduce into public discourse the voice of a group silenced by neurologists, and they would deliver reports from an unknown place of contemplation where they had been loosened from social norms. "I would have caused a revolution!" he said. "I would have liked that when I was young. I always liked revolutions." The truth was perhaps quieter. "In Elías's situation, I can imagine myself sitting in the chair and thinking a lot, but also not thinking for long periods of time, and maybe communicating with this kind of instrument just now and again," he said. "Rather than our blah blah blah, which we do day and night, which is no use to us. And you see that life comes down to fifty questions! We were wringing our hands—'What can we ask him, what can we ask?' Because in the end what are the crucial questions?" Even in the case of Elías Musiris, a patient with a family, a fortune, and a business empire, there seemed at times to be nothing to say, and no overpowering need for information to pass in either direction. "You ask them, 'Do you want to live? Do you want to die?' After that question, everything else is kind of trivial." ♦

"Incidentally—for what it's worth—she's your age."

LETTER FROM EUROPE

REFUGEE

An Afghan woman who fled tyranny on her own.

BY JANE KRAMER

The burka wasn't the first or the last of Afsana's disguises, only the one you would have noticed the most, and, in the event, she left her burka in Afghanistan. When the Dover police found her wandering up the A2 at four in the morning, three years ago this winter—dragging a small suitcase and two dazed children toward what she hoped was London—it was all she could do to keep her black shawl from slipping off her head. And never mind that it was freezing; Afsana would have worn the shawl in August. It was part of the checklist she had had to memorize thirty-five hundred miles away in Peshawar, Pakistan, a few days into a journey that began in Kabul and ended that morning at a Dover police station: Don't use names. Don't ask where you are or how long you're likely to be staying. Better still, don't say anything at all. Not on the plane to Russia, or in the vans you'll ride in, or on the treks you'll make in the middle of the night, crossing borders—not even in the back of the big truck that will drive onto a boat and take you, in darkness, across the water. When the truck stops, climb over the boxes until you feel the tarp. Cut an opening. Climb out, and be careful not to drop the children, because in England the roads are paved. And, remember, put your shawl on your head and tie it, so that whatever Englishman finds you will know you for a good, modest Muslim woman, a mother with her young, fleeing terror, and maybe even forget that you're about to ask him to let you stay.

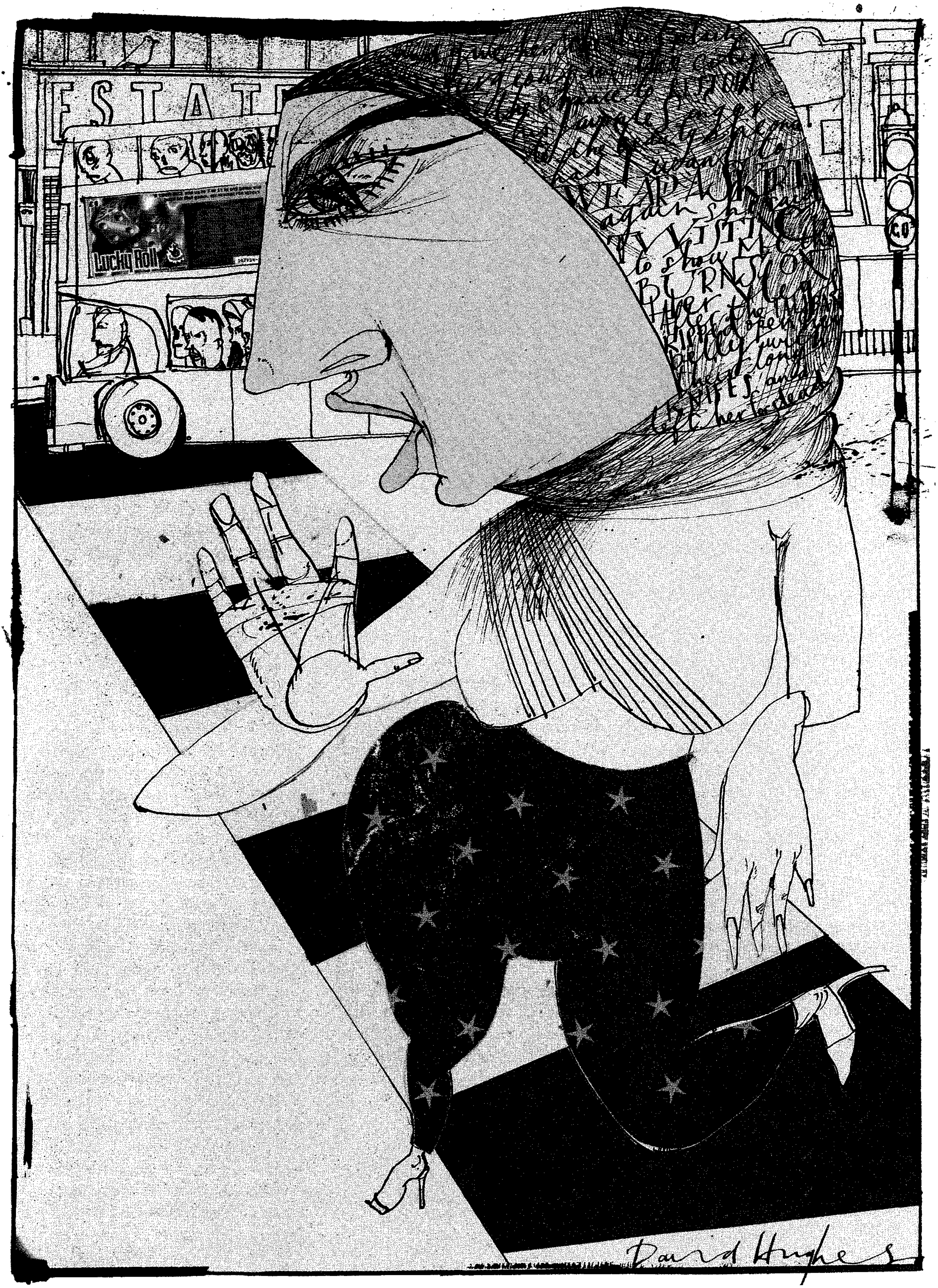
There was never a doubt in Afsana's mind that if she managed to leave Afghanistan she would try to get to England. Among refugees, England is the destination of choice in Europe. Its doors are ajar, if not entirely open; its pockets are deep, if not actually stuffed with cash; and its big cities are so polyglot that no one who survives the traumas of what is by all accounts a humiliating and very dangerous journey will find himself entirely alone. Every year, seventy thousand refugees cross the Channel into Great Britain. Like Afsana, they emerge, silently, from the backs of trucks, or simply appear at a police station or a refugee center—anywhere but the official points of entry where they could be detained or, more often than not, turned away. Afsana was one of the lucky ones. She complains bitterly about her welcome now that she is safe in London, for all practical purposes British herself. (She was granted full refugee status, or, as the Home Office, with characteristic ambivalence, prefers to call it, "indefinite leave to remain," in the near-record time of a few months.) But the truth is that most of the twenty-five thousand Afghans who applied for asylum in Britain in the course of two decades of almost continuous war at home were given, at best, temporary refugee status. Afsana was one of fewer than three thousand Afghans to win the unconditional right to stay.

Twenty years ago, there were hardly any Afghans in England—eighteen or nineteen families. Today, there are as many as forty thousand. But forty thousand isn't really a lot of Afghans, given the attrition in Afghanistan, and, in any case, those Afghans are hardly what the British would consider a typical immigrant community. Many of them are highly educated professionals—men who were raised to privilege, influence, and even power, and who fled with their families (those lucky enough not to have lost their families to torture or slaughter), convinced that the danger in Afghanistan would eventually pass, and that once that happened they'd be going home to put their country back together. "Stranded by history" is the way Jawed Ludin, a young Afghan intellectual and aid worker, himself stranded in London, described them. "You go to a pizza-delivery shop where Afghans work, and you'll find that they're doctors, they're engineers," he told me. "They're thinking about home."

The rule of thumb in most of the Third World is that men get West and women get left behind. Even the women who did manage to flee Afghanistan rarely got much farther than the refugee tent camps across the border in Pakistan or Iran. "They did what women have always done—walked from one poor country to another," Margaret Lally, who helps run the British Refugee Council, said when we spoke last spring. The few Afghan women who have made it to Britain on their own, without husbands or fathers shepherding them into exile, are, almost by definition, women who would be remarkable in any country—something I learned as soon as I started meeting them and heard their stories. Shakiba Habibula, for example, was a pediatrician who came to London to enroll in a graduate course in public health and sought asylum after the Taliban captured her home town and her parents fled, destitute, to Germany; today, she is a research fellow at the University of London's School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Najiba Kasraee was a journalist who had just started working at the BBC when she learned that her mother, her eight-year-old sister, and her twelve-year-old brother had been murdered at the family home in Kabul; today, she is a producer and writer at the BBC World Service and broadcasts children's stories to the Farsi-speaking world. And then there was Seema Ghani, who came as a medical student and ended up with a degree in computer science, a British passport, and a job as a multinational-projects manager at Pricewaterhouse—a job she relinquished last year in order to go home and devote herself to an orphanage and a health clinic for women and children that she had founded with her first British paycheck.

In a way, the only thing that really distinguished these women from other accomplished, middle-class London women was how incredibly young they

DAVID HUGHES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were. The woman who interpreted for me last year was all of eighteen: a high-school prodigy named Zuhra Bahman, who turned out to have been the youngest speaker at the Afghan peace conference. ("The girl who made everyone cry," one of the delegates called her.) Zuhra was fluent in English, learning German, studying for her A levels, writing for *Index on Censorship*, helping to run a group called the Afghan Youth Council, conferring comfortably with talk-show hosts and members of Parliament, paying for her share of a student flat with marathon stints as a paralegal translator, and at the same time enjoying the scattershot social life of a London teen-ager. Zuhra was arguably unusual, but, for an Afghan woman alone in London, "unusual" was not surprising.

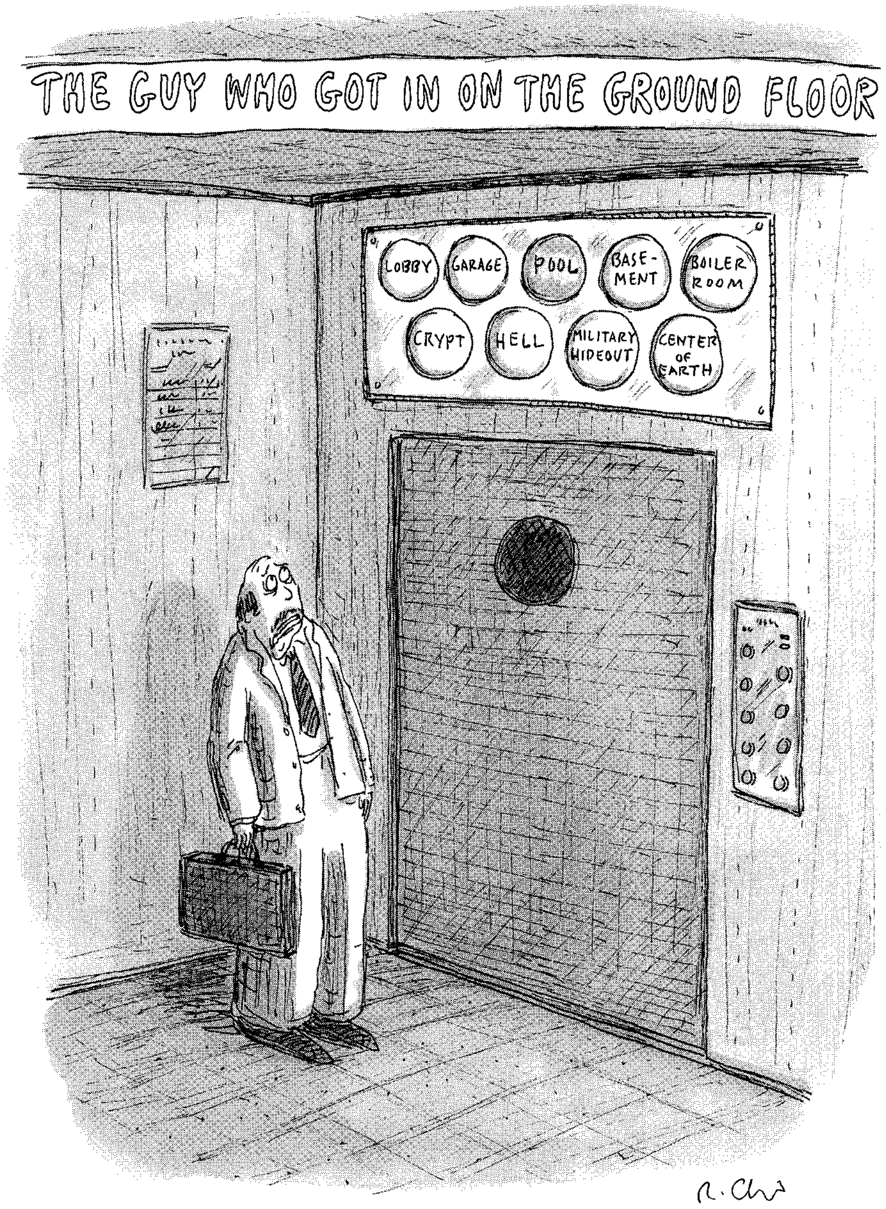
It was Afsana who, by these standards, was surprising: a Muslim woman with no particular political principles, no intellectual or professional credentials—beyond her claim to have been a "famous singer" in Kabul—surviving in London on her own. What interested me about Afsana was the fact that, like the vast majority of Afghan women who came of age under the rule of warlords, mujahideen, and the Taliban, she was so clearly a creature and a victim of that rule, and not, like Shakiba or Najiba or Seema, an exception to it. Afsana belonged to a whole world of despised and abused and abandoned women, a world where, as Jude Boyles, one of the crisis counsellors at London's Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture, put it, a man looks at a woman and says, "One of me is worth two of you." I would have expected to meet Afsana in one of the Peshawar camps, but never in London, lost among the bourgeoisie of the Afghan diaspora.

Most Afghan women would have counted Afsana lucky, but then most Afghan women hadn't seen the blackened burns on the backs of her legs and the livid scar running down her belly—gruesome evidence of the violence she had suffered in the country she still called home. From the point of view of a woman scrambling to feed her children in a filthy tent city in Pakistan, Afsana had found a very good life. She collected the equivalent of two hundred dollars a week in benefits, most of it in disability payments for the injuries that she said made it impossible for her to take a job or, indeed, to walk more than a couple of blocks or climb a flight of stairs. It wasn't much money, but she paid virtually no rent—less than ten dollars a week, thanks to British council housing—for a small but serviceable two-room flat off a high street in one of the outlying London boroughs where poor foreigners usually end up living. There was food on the cloth that she spread on the floor at mealtimes. There was a huge Sanyo television on the dresser where she kept the children's clothes, a broadband radio and a CD player and a VCR and a tape deck, and even an expensive Sony PlayStation—something she'd demanded, straight off, the day we met for the first time and I asked if the children needed anything. She had filled her one closet with a collection of sexy Western outfits that she'd picked up shopping at a discount clothing outlet in Golders Green. Her taste, I would say, was more London than Kabul—at least, to judge by the gold sandals and shimmering panne-velvet pants suit she wore when I took her and the children to the Regents Park zoo one gray March morning, and the black leather jacket, tight fringed jeans, and stiletto boots she chose for a night out at the local Afghan pizza parlor. But she had kept the shawl. She wore it whenever she went to the post office to collect her disability pay, or visited the doctor for her prescriptions, or took the bus to her daughter's school. She had lived by her wits—refugees call this "survivor's instinct"—long enough to know that the people she depended on most to help her preferred the modest and demure Afsana to the Afsana in tight jeans and four-inch heels prowling the outlets of Golders Green.

It may be that Afsana, in London, was a woman of even more disguises than she had been under the Taliban at home. One of the first things she asked me was to give her a new name—Afsana—a name that no one would associate with her. (I have changed the names of her family, too.) "I don't want any Afghan knowing anything about me" was how she explained it, though she could easily have added "any Briton," because no matter how often she looked at the signed, stamped "indefinite leave to remain" letter, smoothed into a plastic folder in her chest of drawers, she didn't really believe that the British were not going to change their minds and send her home. When she tried to describe her life "when I thought that you died one time, and not, like here, every day"—her life before the scars and burns that, from the point of view of a pretty young woman who was not yet thirty, were perhaps the most annihilating disguise of all—she always began by talking about how much more beautiful she'd been "when I was still looking like myself." But "myself" was a stranger, someone she referred to resentfully, given the distance that divided her from that woman now. "This is the Afsana I was," she'd say, sitting cross-legged on the floor with a bottle of nail polish in one hand and a Marlboro in the other, scrutinizing herself on one of the videos she had managed to salvage from her brief career as a singer, stopping midsentence to admire the way she'd looked in a favorite gown or with gold flashing on her arms and neck and ears and fingers.

Her son, Nabi, at eight, was in charge of the video remote. He knew the cassettes by heart, and was actually in one of them, a little boy scurrying past a drummer, a keyboard player, and a couple of languid men lounging on a low couch against the wall of a small room while Afsana wailed her way through a repertoire of Afghan love songs and a bored-looking colleague jiggled her breasts and danced. Afsana called it her promotion video, and said that it was shot in her agent's recording studio in Peshawar. But something about the room, or the men in it—or maybe the fact that, by the end of the tape, Afsana was dancing for them, too—seemed to disturb Nabi. He liked to fast-forward to the good parts, to the closeups of his mother's face, plump then, and creamy, with thick, pale makeup under a halo of dyed-blond curls, and then to squeeze his eyes shut and hold the image while she sang.

Laila, who was six and restless, preferred the entertainment on London's Indian television channels; she could analyze a Bombay horror movie with the authority of a child who'd witnessed more horror in her six years than most Bollywood moguls could invent in a lifetime. (She called her doll Dead Lucy.) She had nowhere to play, really. The flat opened onto a busy street. The room she shared with Nabi was almost entirely taken up by their two beds pushed together, though they rarely slept there. They felt safer sleeping with their mother, in the big bed in the other room, and Afsana let them, unless the man she described as "my male friend who likes to come sometimes to talk" was visiting, or she ran out of pills and needed to be left alone. She had squirrelled away a shopping bag full of small white boxes labelled with exotic names—Omeprazole, Zopiclone, Felicium, Diclofenac, Valium. And while she couldn't read the instructions, or even remember what most of the pills were for (heartburn, insomnia, inflammation, anxiety), she gobbled them down, counting how many she had left each day and planning her next assault on the two irritable receptionists at the National Health surgery who provided a reluctant access to her doctor.



Afsana's pills were her talismans against a wayward fate that had already left her sick in body and heart, with two small children to raise and no man to support her—only a "friend who comes to talk," and in fact talked so much and so insistently that she sometimes lost patience and began to scream and hit him. When that happened, she worried that she would end up hitting the children, too—a report from a council mental-health worker said that she already had—and she told them to stay away, to go to their tiny room and play. Afsana wasn't really interested in having a friend who was just a refugee, like her, and who drove a minicab off the books, and in any event had a wife and children in Afghanistan. The man she referred to as her husband, and never by name, was almost certainly dead. She claimed to have had no word of him for four years, since the night the Taliban broke into their house, beat him savagely, and carried him off, pausing only to stab Afsana "eight times" with the bayonets on their rifles. It occurred to her sometimes that in England she might marry again, but she wasn't hopeful. "If I met somebody now, it would take a year to explain my body," she said, pulling up her tunic and tracing the long, thick, jagged scar. "I would open my clothes . . . and who would want me?"

In Peshawar, planning her escape, she had imagined herself in the care of a well-connected English doctor—not the overworked, underpaid Sri Lankan public practitioner she was assigned to now but a doctor who could pick up the phone and order the best plastic surgeons in the city to restore to his favorite singer the beauty she had once had. "I want to wear a skirt again," she said, twisting to show me the burns on her legs, "like other women."

The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, known as the Geneva Convention, defines a refugee as someone who, "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." It does not include persecution for reasons of sex, a lapse most often explained as having to do with the "specific exigencies" of postwar Europe—and one that strongly suggests that women, in 1951, were not a category of victims that the men drafting the convention even considered. The result has been that the right of women to seek and gain asylum from crimes committed against them *as* women has never really been established. The practice in most of the West has been that women

THE PLIGHT OF THE OFFICELESS
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fleeing sexual persecution in times of war or occupation qualify for at least "exceptional"—the euphemism for "temporary"—refugee status. But terror against ordinary women living in what passes in most of the world for peacetime, persecution as theology or policy or a kind of mass social psychosis, has been for the most part ignored.

"No one wants to talk about it, but the one thing [Afghans] do agree on is that the biggest victims of our twenty years' war are women," Zahir Tanin, who once ran the best daily in Kabul and is now in London, running the Afghan desk at the BBC World Service, told me. During those years, sexual traffic in women became endemic. Tanin calls it a meeting of "the old underground culture of abusing women" with Islamist fanaticism and the war economy. Afghan women in exile today live in constant fear of being sent home to a "liberation" of wishful Western thinking. Liberation (let alone peace) is a luxury that no woman living in Afghanistan—outside of Kabul, with its five thousand foreign peacekeeping troops—can seriously claim to enjoy. The Taliban are back in Kandahar; the warlords are in power in the countryside, not to mention in parts of Kabul itself; and women continue to be kidnapped, raped, sold, and murdered or left to die in the old rituals of humiliation with which Afghan warriors have traditionally unmanned their rivals.

Legally, a man or woman seeking asylum in Western Europe is the responsibility of the first European Union country he or she enters, but that responsibility depends almost entirely on the country involved. Most governments view the Geneva Convention through the prism of their own history, their own culture, and their own political interests. Germans interpret it to apply to victims of state terror—a reference, inevitably, to the terror in Europe during the Nazi years. Frenchmen tend to interpret it to exclude victims in former French colonies, like Algeria, whose economies they still control. Italians try to avoid having to interpret it at all, by doing their best to insure that boats carrying refugees to Italy are turned away before they get to port. Add to that the xenophobia in Europe today, and the fear of Muslims stirred by September 11th—not to mention the conviction, fuelled by the far right and the tabloid press, that every asylum seeker is an illegal economic immigrant, lying his way into a cushy system—and you can understand why for each aid worker helping refugees to enter Europe there are ten bureaucrats looking for ways to drive those refugees away.

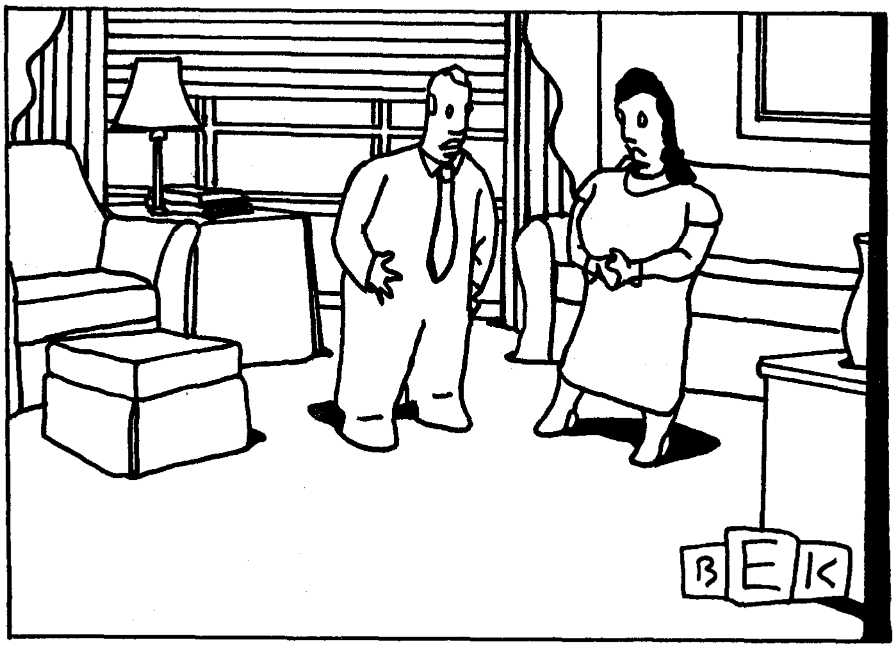
The British writer Caroline Moorehead, who is one of the country's most eloquent defenders of asylum rights, once told me that, for her, the saddest thing about listening to the stories refugees told was that each refugee, knowing the odds against asylum—knowing that asylum itself involved a kind of triage—had to describe a past that was more horrific than the one that his compatriot, and often his friend, had just recited to the person who would make the choice. The stories that women tell more often than not begin as the same story. They involve a kind of hatred that comes close to being universal—a sexual rage that is almost always at the center of crimes against women, whether it's acted out in a political prison or a whorehouse, on a battlefield or at home. And, even sadder, they almost always end in the same silence. Doctors and therapists who treat those women tell me that, because of this, it's nearly impossible to help them. Jude Boyles said, "They come to me with a complete inability to speak"—which is to say that some part of their story remains, literally, unspeakable.

By the time I met Afsana, late last winter, she had told *her* story to the British Refugee Council; to the well-known human-rights lawyer who took over her application after one "refugee specialist" (a Sikh with a storefront law firm and cut-rate fees, who made up for his inattention with invention) had botched it; to a caseworker at the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture; to a psychiatrist who commuted from Oxford every week to treat refugee patients; to the score of welfare bureaucrats and social workers and doctors and housing clerks with whom she maintained an angry, exasperated truce; to a freelance television team making a documentary; and to the strangers like me who had knocked on her door, referred by other Afghans who would never have suggested that their own wives talk to anyone but had heard of an entertainer named Afsana, who would be less discreet. She had recited her story, weeping or shouting or whispering, so many times to so many people, adding to it or subtracting from it according to the needs of the moment and the degree of her confusion and fear, that she could barely remember what she had said to whom and which of those lives was the life she'd actually led. But one part of her story remained constant: it never seemed to be the whole story.

This is the story Afsana told me, and I have no way of knowing how much of it is true, apart from the attacks on her body and the terror that drove her away. She was born in Kabul, which she called "the city of my heart." She described a pampered childhood in a big house near the Kabul airport, with eleven bedrooms and four bathrooms and a kitchen for each of her father's three wives and their various children—anywhere from seven to nineteen children, depending on how patient Afsana was feeling that day and how many names she remembered. Her father, by her account, was an important colonel in the Afghan Army, or, rather, in a succession of Afghan armies, from the King's Army to the Communists' Army. He was a Tajik and "very modern." He flew Afsana around the country on Russian planes, saw to it that she went to a decent school, and never complained when she went shopping and came home with a miniskirt or a pair of jeans. Her mother, the oldest and first of her father's wives, was very religious. She never went out of the house without a chador or a burka, and she made life miserable for his second wife, who insisted on wearing skirts. But when it came to her daughters she had no choice. The Communists wanted to see Afghan women educated and working, and although this meant working for *them*, it was still a revolution in a country where the first girls' school opened only in 1921, and eight years later—as I was reminded by Mahbuba Hoquqmal, Afghanistan's new Minister for Women's Affairs—a king was forced into exile for trying to impose a ban on polygamy and child marriage. The result was that Afsana and two of her three sisters left their house at eight each morning in long black uniforms, with book bags slung over their shoulders, like the daughters of the intelligentsia.

When Afsana was sixteen, a young man noticed her on the bus to school. He approached her father, negotiated for her hand, and met her on the day they became engaged. "It had to be done," Afsana told me when I asked if she'd liked him. "It's not that I didn't like him. I liked him because he was my husband. What else could I do? There was no point in liking somebody else." That was the closest she came to regret as far as her missing husband was concerned. She allowed that he had loved her voice, and had even asked her to sing while she cooked his dinner, but to her mind he was not very different from any other Afghan male. ("Animals," she called them, and, given what had happened to her, it wasn't much of an exaggeration.) At first, she said that her husband had been a "high officer" in the Afghan Army, like her father. Then she said that he'd gone to Moscow as a teenager and come home with a job in KHAD, which was the acronym for Afghanistan's Communist secret police. "I don't care anymore," Afsana told me when I asked if she ever missed him, or even wondered if he was alive somewhere. "I don't care about *anyone* else. If I'd known my life would be like this, I would never have married, never have had children. Why should I worry about my husband? He doesn't have these responsibilities. He's the lucky one, alive or dead." She rarely mentioned him after that, except to complain that he'd been "very strict, and I had to cover myself," and that his family was even worse. "I was up at four in the morning, baking bread" was how she described the first year of their marriage, in his father's house. It took her a year to persuade her husband to move out into their own house, and she never went back.

She told me repeatedly that it was the neighbors, and not her husband's family, who had saved her life after the Taliban ripped open her belly and left her for dead. It was the neighbors who had carried her, unconscious, to a Kabul hospital, where the doctors refused to treat her; who risked their own lives looking for a woman doctor from an underground clinic who *would* treat her; and, finally, eight days and forty-five makeshift stitches later, who saw to it that she was safely installed in her brother Farid's house. It took Afsana four months to recover, but that, in her telling, was the easy part. Without a husband, she didn't know what to do for money. Women were forbidden to work. Her parents were hiding, and Farid, who'd lost a hand in one of the battles for Kabul, couldn't support his own family, let alone Afsana's. All she had, as she described it, was "my voice and my songs." It wasn't a voice I could judge, really. To my ear, it was grating—thin, metallic in timbre, not warm or tender, or even very sexy. The day I met her, she told me that, actually, she'd much rather have been an airline hostess, that it was her teachers who pushed her to sing, telling so many people about Afsana's beautiful voice that the invitations had started coming and she discovered herself an entertainer. Her first jobs, she said, were in "clubs and cabarets." Later, she said that she'd sung only privately, "at women's parties." But she was al-



"I went to farmers' markets with my first wife. I don't know if I want to go through all that again."

NIGHT

1.
Somehow a light plane
coming in low at three
in the morning to a local airstrip
hits a complex of tones
in its growl so I hear mingled
with it a peal of church bells,
swelling in and out
of audibility, arrhythmic,
but rich and insistent, then,
though I try to hold them,
they dissolve, fade away;
only that monochrome
drone bores on
alone through the dark.

2.
This is one of our new
winters, dry, windless,
and warm, when even
the lightest cover is stifling.
A luxuriant flowering
pear tree used to shelter
the front of our house,
but last August a storm
took it, a bizarrely focussed
miniature tornado never
before seen in this climate,
and now the sky outside
the window is raw, the inert
air viscous and sour.

3.
I was ill, and by the merest
chance happened to be
watching as the tree fell.
I saw the branches helplessly
flail, the fork of the trunk
with a great creak split,
and the heavier half start
down, catch on wires,
and hang, lifting and subsiding
in the last barbs of the gale
as though it didn't know yet
it was dead, then it did,
and slipped slowly sideways
onto its own debris in the gutter.

4.
When Ivan Karamazov
is reciting his wracking disquisition
about the evils perpetrated
on children, opining whether
human salvation would be worth
a single child's suffering,
you know he's close to breaking
down, sobbing in shame
and remorse, and I wonder
if he'd imagined our whole planet,
the children with it,
wagered in a mad gamble
of world against wealth,
what would he have done?

5.
What do I do? Fret
mostly, and brood, and lie
awake. Not to sleep
wasn't always so punishing.
Once, in a train, stalled
in mountains, in snow,
I was wakened by the clank
of a trainman's crowbar
on the undercarriage of my car.
I lifted the leathery shade
and across a moon-dazzled
pine-fringed slope a fox
cut an arc; everything
else was pure light.

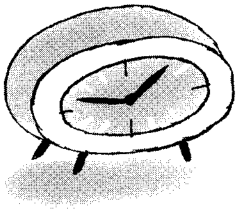
6.
I wanted it to last forever,
but I was twenty, and before
I knew it was back sleeping.
Do I ever sleep that way
now, innocent of everything
beyond my ken? No,
others are always with me,
others I love with my life,
yet I'll leave them scant
evidence of my care, and little
trace of my good intentions,
as little as the solacing shush
of the phantom limbs of our slain
tree will leave on the night.

—*C. K. Williams*

ways clear about having been famous by the time she was seventeen and married.

Kabul, in those last days before the warlords and the Islamist fanatics—Afghans call it "the time of the city culture"—was home to thousands of singers and dancers, and never mind that some of the women who sang or danced publicly were prostitutes or considered prostitutes, which for an Afghan man usually amounted to the same thing. ("Afghans don't like to see a woman become a singer" was how Afsana explained it.) Everybody knew their songs and dances; everybody joined in when they came to parties to perform. In fact, the demand for entertainers was so great that the city had long supported a thriving neighborhood, the Kharabat, where families of entertainers lived in houses called "music shops"—establishments somewhere between a geisha house, a recording studio, a performance space, and a video-rental store. Customers could drop in to buy a cassette, or hire a singer for a sister's wedding, or, if they had the money, spend the evening and throw a party themselves.

But the mujahideen destroyed a good part of the Kharabat when they started bombing the city, around the time that Afsana married. And, of course, six years later, the Taliban took Kabul and banned music, with the exception of one drum and a couple of Sunni chants. (It was a ban that the Taliban themselves were said to ignore; like the warlords before them, they kidnapped singers and dancers and kept them in brothels.) Singers who were known to be working secretly were punished, and often killed, as soon as they were caught—which may be why, sooner or later, the ones who wanted to survive had little choice but to join the exodus to Peshawar and try to establish reputations there. Afsana herself crossed the border some four months after her wounds healed, with her blond hair hidden under a burka and the name of an agent tucked into her pants. "The agent was like me, very famous," she told me, the day she described her first trip. "He had a big video-cassette shop, and a studio, and he was working for *everybody*. I gave him a false name. I told him, 'I'm a singer, I want to sing,' and he told me, 'I have to see if your voice is good. Come back tomorrow and sing for me privately.'" He must have been pleased, because he made a cassette of Afsana singing, paid her for it, and put it in his store, and, by her account, it did so well that he travelled to Kabul ten days later to invite her to join a big holiday concert in one of the Peshawar stadiums. She made three hundred dollars at the concert and slept, free, in a fancy Peshawar hotel—so popular already, she said, that her agent was able to book her for three more concerts and nearly twenty private parties over the next year.



I don't know where she lived then. I suspect that she took the children and moved to Peshawar, out of the way of her husband's family, which by Muslim law had the right to claim them. But Afsana said that she always came back to Kabul, to her brother Farid's house, and that her agent often made the long minibus trips to and from Kabul with her, posing as a relative—it was part of their understanding, she told me—to insure that she wasn't stopped. It may be that she wanted to make the point that she'd fled to England from Afghanistan, and not from the relative safety of a life in Pakistan. It may be that she was just ashamed of what that understanding was. Once, when we were watching her promotion video, she pointed to one of the men in it and said quietly, "He wanted to marry me," and I wondered if he was the agent, or a friend, or simply a client of the shop. At first, Afsana wouldn't say. And it hardly mattered, because someone informed on Afsana, and that was when the Taliban paid her a second visit. "They asked me, 'Are you the singer?' I said yes, because I didn't want them to think it was my brother's wife, so they dragged me into a room, and in front of the children, in front of *everyone*, they lit the match." The burns on her legs were severe, and they were badly infected by the time her brother managed to smuggle her back across the border to a hospital that would treat her. But by then it was clear that he couldn't keep her anymore. "He told me, 'The first time, they stabbed you and you didn't die,'" Afsana said. "'The second time, they burned you and you didn't die. The next time, you'll die, and I will, too.'"

The hospital cost Afsana most of her gold jewelry. The trip to England cost her whatever was left, her old house, and everything in it. She sold them on the black market, through the Peshawar trafficker who arranged the trip and his "real-estate contact" in Kabul. The price seems to have been somewhere between five thousand and eighteen thousand dollars—Afsana revised it every time she told the story, though eighteen thousand was close to the going rate—for the plane out of Peshawar, a month hidden in a two-room flat "somewhere in Russia," and days spent travelling through Eastern Europe in the company of a series of local handlers who never spoke a word to her. Afsana's trip was more terrifying than painful. Refugees in her circumstances rarely make it to Western Europe in less than two or three months; sometimes, it takes a year. I've heard stories of refugees living twenty-five to a room the size of a closet while they waited for a new handler to appear, and of families with small children indentured to sweat shops in Cyprus or Turkey by traffickers they'd already paid, and of young men losing their minds from claustrophobia when they were forced to travel in a box in the fake underside of an Eastern European tour bus.

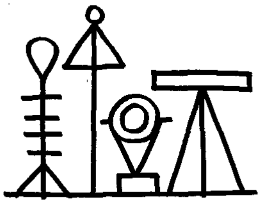
Afsana's trafficker was "very kind." He gave her a discount for the younger children, but, even so, he told her he couldn't include her older daughter, Mursal, who was eight at the time, for "only" eighteen thousand dollars. Afsana left anyway. "It was an opportunity I didn't want to miss," she said. Within a year, Mursal had disappeared, along with Farid and his family. By now they were certainly dead, Afsana told me whenever I asked for news. She said that the summer after she'd got her asylum papers and was free to travel anywhere except Afghanistan she had taken Laila and Nabi to Peshawar to try to find their sister. She had asked her Peshawar friends—"men with reasons to go to Kabul"—to cross the border and look there while she waited. But most of those friends begged off, and "even the men who wanted to go couldn't—they said it would take too long to grow a beard." She stayed in Peshawar, hoping for news, until November. The day she flew back to London, she learned that Kabul had fallen, but by then she had no money to make the trip again. In the meantime, she had lost her flat; the children had lost their place in school; and the family had to start over, in the neighborhood where I first encountered them, a few months later.

For a while, Afsana's stories tore at my heart. She intended them to, and she watched me closely as she told them. Most Afghan refugees I knew avoided talking about the atrocities they'd witnessed or endured. Afghans who had been tortured would remind me, and perhaps themselves, that they were the lucky ones. They were alive, they were out, they all had friends and relatives who had suffered more, including children they would have died to spare. (I discovered that one refugee I met had been forced to pass sentence on his own daughter: "We can kill her now, we can keep her alive while the troops rape her, or we can sell her to an old mujahideen," the warlord who took her away told him.) Afsana, on the other hand, told me, "I want to speak up, I want to tell the world all they have done to me." She sang me a song she'd written: "A person without a country, his heart will cry for his country; when a bird is in a cage, it cries for the beauty of the flower." She saw me as someone who might be useful to her, and I couldn't blame her. Once, she asked me if I paid for talking, the way she'd heard that the London tabloids paid, say, movie stars. It made no sense to Afsana when I tried to explain that it wasn't ethical. What had happened to her in Kabul wasn't ethical, either. She made her displeasure clear. She began to calculate our exchange—my services for hers, as if I were a customer, paying for an afternoon of singing at her agent's studio. She would spread out her cloth, no matter what the hour, and over my protests silently serve me dinner, enforcing an old desert etiquette of hospitality and obligation that left me writing letters for her, filling out forms, badgering the principal at her daughter's school, and arguing with her exasperated and actually quite decent doctor—who was understandably less than eager to see her, given that she'd recently become hysterical in his waiting room, shrieking and sobbing and pummelling herself so fiercely that she ended up with a black eye, and had then run out and flung herself into moving traffic. I'd arrive with groceries and cigarettes for her, sweets for the children; I'd invite the family to dinner, drive them to restaurants and zoos and stores. She never thanked me. She pushed at the limits of my patience—it was one of the few things that amused her—and it occurs to me now that I was part of her education about the West, a way of establishing how far she could go before somebody said no, because she couldn't gauge those limits, coming as she did from a place where the rules were clear and transgression fatal.

"She was the most manipulative patient I ever had," her psychiatrist said, almost cheerfully, when I went to see her. She told me that they'd met monthly during most of Afsana's first year in England, and that Afsana had never once even pretended that she wanted treatment. Afsana came to the sessions because she wanted housing. "The bottom line of what I could really do for Afsana was: very little," the psychiatrist said. But what she *could* do was inform the government that her patient was "suffering from severe depression mainly due to the treatment she received in Afghanistan, but . . . severely aggravated by her living conditions." Which was certainly true. When I asked if Afsana's unnerving practicality might not be the beginning of a kind of recovery, a way of adjusting her expectations to the world she lived in now, the psychiatrist said, "It's not necessarily a sign of health, her preoccupation with the present. It's a sign of reality. Torture doesn't always make you a good person." Afsana's view of their sessions was: "She did help me. Her letter found me a place to live. But she kept asking about my life, and I had no patience to talk."

Afsana had never expected to have to talk in London. She had thought that Nabi would learn English and talk *for* her, which may be why, during the months I knew her, she took Laila to school by bus every morning and kept Nabi at home, protesting that there wasn't a school in the area with a place for him—not, at any rate, a school he could walk to, because she couldn't afford another bus fare. She was still keeping him at home in May, when a caseworker from the local council paid her a visit, discovered him there, and threatened to take both children away unless she saw to their education (which she finally did). There were adult English classes that Afsana could have taken, but she wasn't interested. She paid the fee, went twice, and stopped. "I don't feel like studying. I feel like staying in a dark room," she told me, matter-of-factly. The truth was that she knew more English than she let on, though she claimed that the drugs she took "rot my memory," and at times they did. There were days when I found her not only confused but nearly incoherent. On those days, we would put on one of her videos, and she'd sit on the floor, tears running down her face, while Laila dressed and undressed her doll, and Nabi copied steamy pictures from the covers of his mother's Afghan and Pakistani pop CDs. Nabi spent most of his time on pictures. Once, as a surprise for me, he painted a tree with bare branches and two long stumps, sticking out of the trunk like arms, dripping blood. A few days later, he made his sister a house to play in—a big cardboard carton with pink and blue shutters, a red roof, and doors and windows that opened. The next time I came, he said that his mother had thrown it out. "It wasn't right," she told me when I asked why.

Nabi was a lost, gifted child, and so beautiful that I didn't notice the scar on his cheek until the day Afsana touched it, telling me that he had been burned, too, trying to save her after the Taliban set their fire. I rarely found him playing. Usually, when I knocked, he would come to the door, give me a shy kiss, and retreat to the far corner of his mother's bed, so quiet you'd forget he was there. One day, he asked if I liked Monet, and was pleased that I did, because he loved Monet. He had seen a Monet on a class trip a few weeks into the one term he'd actually gone to school. "I dream about the colors," he told me. But when I offered to take him to see the Monet again Afsana refused. "He's been to the museum once—why does he need to go again?" was how she put it. She never took the children anywhere except on her own errands. She never played with them or read to them or told them stories—not even stories in Dari, the



language they spoke at home. The only story that claimed her attention was her own.

"Bring in the garbage."

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Early last summer, Zuhra, my interpreter, called Afsana to see how she was getting on. Afsana told her that there was still no news of Mursal—no news of anyone in the family, she said—but by this point it was hard for either of us to believe that. Laila had said that she spoke to Mursal often, on her mother's cell phone. One night, I'd arrived at the flat to find Afsana herself on the phone, instructing her male friend to send eight thousand rupees to her father. I didn't know where she'd found eight thousand rupees (about a hundred and sixty dollars), and I wasn't going to ask her. By then, I was fairly embarrassed by my intrusions into her life and her tangled story. She was suspicious of everything. She ordered the children not to answer the door while I was there. She told them not to answer questions. She was terrified that they'd say something to someone that would get her in trouble or contradict her or shame her. "What did she ask you?" she'd hiss at them sotto voce whenever they said something to me that she hadn't heard. One night, when the family was out to dinner at the Afghan pizza parlor, two young Tajik thugs stationed themselves at the next table and sat there staring Afsana down, like vigilantes. She turned pale, whispered something I couldn't hear, and didn't say another word until I'd paid the bill and we were on the sidewalk.

I had tried bringing a few of my Afghan friends to meet her, young refugees who I hoped might reach her in a way I couldn't, but it didn't happen. They were moved by Afsana, but dismissive, maybe because they'd all worked hard at making lives for themselves in London, struggling with English, staying in dismal flats that made Afsana's look grand, taking terrible, exhausting jobs to pay for school. Afsana swore that she was too ill to work, unless it was work singing, work that was worthy of her talent. The first acceptable job she *was* offered—singing a couple of nights a week in an Afghan restaurant—lasted only six weeks before the owner's wife fired her. The second, and last, was better—singing at a henna party for an Afghan wedding. But she said that after the party no one called. There isn't much of a market in London for Afghan singers. Afghans getting married abroad today are more apt to hire rock groups and Muslim rappers.

By the time I met Afsana, there was probably no way that anyone could claim to know her; there may have been no way that anyone could help her, either. She could show me terrible wounds inflicted by men with bayonets. She could describe being set on fire. But I will never know if she was raped or traded or sold, or if she sold herself to survive, or if she came from a Kharabat music family or from the respectable military family she claimed. I will never know who was really responsible for the wounds I saw, or, for that matter, how she survived in Peshawar, or what her understanding with her agent involved, or how she raised the money to escape. It's possible that nothing she told me was true; it's possible that everything was. Sometimes she complained to me about being lonely. She'd say that she never did anything or met anyone—that she'd never even *been* anywhere in London, because she was "too sad." Once, I asked her if there was anything she'd dreamed of being able to do there, and she said, "If I had money, I would be like a man and open a music shop—in Southall or Wembley, where there are a lot of Afghans, a lot of Asians. I would sell Afghan cassettes and videos. I would advertise, and send out brochures. People who wanted a singer would get in touch with me." She showed me the clothes she would wear, singing—the tight pants and silky shells, and possibly, she said, the shiny wet-black motorcycle jacket she'd bought that spring, when the phone call came about the henna party. "I was very smart that night," she told me. "It was my first party in London, and I put makeup on and wore these trousers. I was very proud of myself. I was feeling great, and, really, I *was* great. I was happy." It was the only time I ever heard her say "happy." "Sometimes, when I'm alone and frustrated, I sing here, as loud as I can," she said, suddenly, not much later. "There is no audience to hear me." ♦

FICTION

THE CARD TRICK

BY TESSA HADLEY

It was 1974: not a good year, clotheswise, if you were an eighteen-year-old girl, tall and overweight, with thick, curling hair and glasses. Gina liked best to wear a duffel coat, underneath which she imagined she hid herself. But this was summer, and she was on holiday, and she'd had reluctantly to leave the duffel coat at home. The fashion was for smocks and long skirts with deep frills and cotton prints, so she mostly wore a Laura Ashley dress in a blue sprigged cotton that was meant to look as if it had been faded by long-ago haymaking in meadows of wildflowers; its buttons gaped open across her bust and it was tight around her hips and its effect on her, she was quite sure, was not rustic but hulking and vaguely penitentiary. Sometimes as she walked, bitter tears stung her eyes at the idea of the sheer affront of her ugliness forcing itself upon the successive layers of the air. At other times, she was more hopeful.

Today, at least, the sun was not shining. When it shone—and it had shone every day since she arrived—it made things worse; it seemed such an insult to nature and beauty not to want to peel off all one's clothes and run around on the beach, not to be happy. But now the sky was a consoling soft gray, which dissolved from time to time into warm rain, and everybody was more or less muffled under raincoats and umbrellas. Because it was raining, Mamie had driven inland with Gina from the house on the coast, to visit Wing Lodge.

Mamie was her mother's friend, and Gina was staying with her and her family for a fortnight; although to call her a friend did not quite explain the relationship, since Mamie was also a client, for whom Gina's mother made clothes. Mamie was small and very pretty, with sloping shoulders and ash-blond hair and a face that was always screwing up with laughter. Her tan was the kind you can get only in the South of France. (She had a house there, too.) Her clothes seemed effortless—today, for example, a Liberty print blouse under a cream linen pinafore—but Gina had seen some of these things in the making and knew how much effort actually went into them: the serious scrutiny of pinned-up hemlines in front of the mirror, Mamie bringing things back ruefully, apologetically, after a week or two, with a nagging suspicion that a sleeve had been set in too high, or an inspiration that the seams would look wonderful with two rows of overstitching.

She was being very kind—very encouraging—to Gina. She had not made any mention of the Laura Ashley dress or of the barrette that had seemed an appealing idea when Gina brushed her hair that morning but was now bobbing against her cheek in a way that suggested it had slid to an altogether wrong and ridiculous place.

They stopped off on their way to Wing Lodge at a tearoom by the side of the country road; they were the only customers in a small room crowded with unbalanced little chairs and glass-topped wicker tables, smelling of damp and cake.

It'll probably be instant coffee, Mamie whispered with conspiratorial amusement. (Gina only ever had instant at home.) But I don't care. Do you? Or we could always risk the tea. And you've got to have a Danish pastry or something, to keep you going.

Complicatedly, Mamie was making reference to the fact that Gina clearly oughtn't to be eating pastries of any kind; but her diet, which was perpetual during this period of her life, alternating drearily between punishing obedience and frantic transgression, had been thrown into such chaos since she'd been staying at Mamie's—on the one hand, she was too shy to refuse the food that was pressed upon her; on the other, she didn't dare to raid the fridge or the cupboards in between meals—that she didn't even know whether she was being good or not. She took advantage of the lack of clarity to agree to the pastry.

Gina had just had her A-level results—three A's—and she was preparing for her Cambridge entrance examinations in November. Mamie professed an exaggerated awe of her cleverness.

JOEL MEYEROWITZ, "BAY, LATE AFTERNOON"/ARIEL MEYEROWITZ GALLERY

You really make me so ashamed, she said, when she had finished charming the gray-haired waitress and giving very exact instructions as to how she liked her tea ("pathetically weak, no milk, just pour it the very instant the water's on the leaves, I'm so sorry to be such a frightful nuisance"). We're such duffers in my family. We've hardly got an O level between us—and that's after spending an absolute fortune on the children's education. Josh simply refused to go back to Bedales to do retakes. Becky left the day she was sixteen. She never even sat any exams. How I'd love for one of them to have your brains.

I'm not that special, Gina lied, her voice muffled through damp pastry flakes.

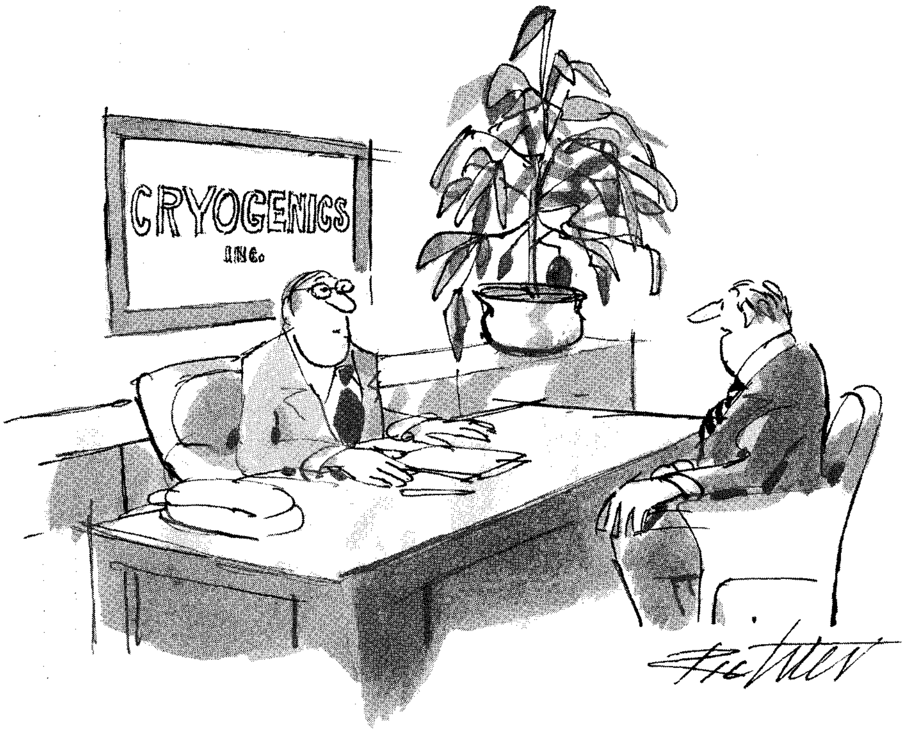
Somewhere in the deepest recesses of herself, Gina pitied Mamie and her children, precisely along the lines that Mamie suggested. The children—three older boys and a girl Gina's age—certainly weren't clever in the way she was. She'd never seen them reading a book; they hadn't known the other day at breakfast who Walter Gropius was; and she was sure that they were sublimely ignorant about all the things that seemed to her ultimately to matter in the world: literature and painting and the history of ideas. But that arrogant intellectual reflex felt so remotely subterranean as to be almost inconsequential, compared with her willingness to acknowledge every advantage that Becky and Josh and Tom and Gabriel had on the surface in the here and now, in honor and envy of which she was horribly ready to abase herself. And Mamie was surely disingenuous in her praise of Gina's brains. She was just being kind. She wouldn't have exchanged brains, really, for the easy personable charm that all her children had, not if it meant that they'd have awkward bodies and thick glasses.

And, even if they weren't clever, Mamie's children didn't actually say stupid things, as Gina did, tongue-tied with bookish awkwardness. On the contrary, they were funny and chatty and informed about practical matters. They confessed to being indifferent to politics but were sincerely charming and generous with the woman who came to clean and cook and iron for them every day, whereas Gina didn't know how to talk to her. And then they were masters of arts that Gina knew she would never be competent in, no matter how hard she tried: tennis, for example, and motorcycling, and snorkeling. She couldn't even ride a push-bike.

Gabriel, the oldest, had a darkroom and developed his own photographs; Becky posed for him, unembarrassedly arranging her face to look its best whenever called upon. If Gabriel turned the camera on Gina, she swivelled away, protesting and sulking, so he soon stopped trying. The house was filled with vivid black-and-white pictures, in which the lives of this family seemed poignant and enchanting, even beyond what you could grasp in ordinary everyday contact with them. Gina studied the photographs with the same yearning she felt over the fashion pictures in magazines: trying to understand how one might possess oneself with such certainty, and know so confidently how to live.

They were all beautiful. Gabriel and Becky looked like Mamie, small with pretty faces, turned-up noses, and huge eyes. The others looked like their father, who was in the South of France with friends. (A separation that seemed to Gina, whose parents did everything together, both strange and significant: her mother had hinted, out of confidences accorded while she was crawling around a hemline with her mouth full of pins, that all was not well in Mamie's marriage. Still, Dickie's absence was a great relief. Gina had seen him only once or twice, when he came to pick up Mamie after a fitting, but it had been enough to know that he was terrifying, tall and tanned and savagely impatient.) Tom and Josh—Josh was the nearest boy to Gina in age—were tall, with slim long bodies, fine skin taut over light strong bones, sensitive-knuckled hands and feet. She had got used to their near-nakedness on the beach in swimming trunks, or bare-chested in cutoff jeans. It was 1974: they wore their sun-bleached hair long, and they walked barefoot everywhere.

The spare bedroom Gina was staying in was on the ground floor of the house, and it opened onto the hall, whose dark parquet was always dusted with a layer of fine sand blown in from the beach. She spent a lot of time in her room—"working," she told them—and sometimes, when she peeped out of her door to see if the coast was clear to visit the bathroom, she saw the prints of the boys' bare feet in the sand, crossing the hall to the kitchen or the stairs. For some reason, this moved her, and her



"I'd like to have myself frozen until the Democrats regain control of Congress."

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heart clenched in an excitement more breathlessly sexual than if she'd seen the boys themselves.

The visit to Wing Lodge had been part of the pretext for Gina's coming to visit Mamie in the first place. It was the house where John Morrison, her favorite novelist, had lived, and she had desperately wanted to make a pilgrimage there; but she was beginning to wish that she could have come on her own. She was burdened by her sense of Mamie's kindness: Mamie had clearly never read any of Morrison's books, and she could have no good reason, surely, to want to see his house. Gina worried over the things that Mamie would probably rather have done, and in more congenial company.

But when they arrived in the little town and found the house on one of its oldest streets, behind the church, a more complex unease began to dawn on Gina. Wing Lodge stood back behind a walled front garden, which even in the rain was very lovely: pale roses bowed and dripping with water, a crumbling sundial, a path of old paving stones set into the grass, leading to a bench under a gnarled apple tree.

Isn't it just charming? Mamie exclaimed, pausing on the porch to shake off the umbrella she had gallantly insisted on sharing with Gina, so that they were now both rather wet. This is such a treat. Thank you so much for bringing me here. I can't imagine why we've never been before.

Gina had thought that at last, at Wing Lodge, she would be on home ground. She knew so much about John Morrison, a friend of Conrad and Ford, given a complimentary mention by Henry James in "The New Novel." She had written the long essay for her English A level on his use of complex time schemes. She loved the spare texture of his difficult, sad books, and felt that she was exceptionally equipped to understand them. Faced with his most obscure passages (he wasn't elaborate like James but compressed and allusive), she trusted herself to intuit his meaning, even if she couldn't quite disentangle it.

But as she followed Mamie through the front door into the low-ceilinged hall she realized that she had miscalculated. She was not entering one of Morrison's books, where she could feel confident; she was entering his house, where she might not. Two middle-aged women sat at a table on which leaflets and a cash box were arranged; wood panelling polished to a glow as deep and savory as horse chestnuts reflected the yellow light from a couple of table lamps; tall vases of flowers stood against the wall on the uneven flagstone floor. Gina stepped flinchingly around a Persian rug that opened like a well of color at her feet.

This is Gina, Mamie told the women as she got out her purse to pay. She's the daughter of a very gifted and creative friend of mine. We're here today because she loves John Morrison's books so much and has written her A-level essay about him. She's very, very bright.

The women's smiles were coldly unenthusiastic. They advised the visitors to start in the room on the right and make their way around to the study, which was arranged as it had been in the writer's lifetime. If they went upstairs at the end of the tour, they would find an exhibition of editions of the works. Which might interest you, one of them suggested skeptically.

The house was furnished—sparely, exquisitely—with a mixture of antiques and curiosities and modern things: a venerably worn Indian tapestry thrown across an old chaise longue, an elm Art Deco rocking chair, drawings by Wyndham Lewis and Gaudier-Brzeska. It was dark everywhere, and the lamps were on in the middle of the day: the low, deeply recessed casement windows were running with rain and plastered with wet leaves. Mamie moved through it all with a kind of hushed rapture, absorbing the aura of the great man, despite the fact that she had no idea what he was great for.

So sweet! she whispered emphatically. What a darling place. What treasures.

Gina thought perplexedly of the letters Morrison had written from Wing Lodge: full of damp walls and leaking roofs and smoking chimneys and penetrating cold, as well as self-deprecating confessions of untidiness and neglect. She hadn't imagined that his house would be like this. How could he have afforded all these possessions? The rooms were like Mamie's: glossy with value and distinction, a kind of patina of initiated good taste.

Do they live here? she asked. Those ladies?

Oh, I should think so, wouldn't you? It feels very much like a home, not a museum. The widow stayed on here, apparently, until a few years ago. So I suppose they've just kept a few of the rooms as she left them. It's only open a couple of afternoons a week.

There was a photograph of Anne, the American wife and widow, on the plain writing table in the study: young, with a Katherine Mansfield fringe and bobbed hair and a necklace of beads the size of cherries. Morrison had been a world wanderer, with a Scottish father and a Norwegian mother. (You could feel the influence of a certain Scandinavian neurasthenia in his novels.) He had settled down at last, here in the South of England, written his best books here, and died here, in his fifties, in 1942.

Can't you just imagine being able to write at this desk? Mamie said encouragingly.

Gina looked at her dumbly across the charming room, with its waxed floor slanting quaintly to the window, unable to say how unlikely it seemed to her at this moment that anyone could ever have written anything worth reading in a house like this. She thought of art as a sort of concealed ferocity, like the fox hidden under the Spartan boy's shirt. It seemed to her that any authentic utterance would be stifled by the loveliness, the serene self-completeness of this room. What could one do here but self-congratulate: write cookery books, perhaps, or nostalgic reminiscences?

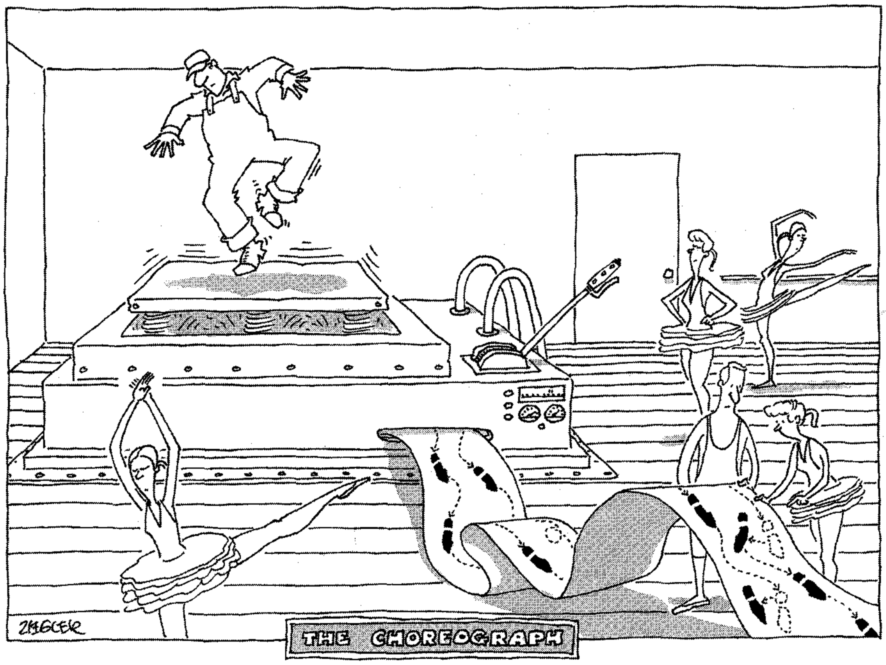
At the same time, she was filled with doubt, in case she was deluded, in case it turned out that art was a closed club after all, one that she would never be able to enter, she who had never owned one thing as beautiful as the least object here.

Sometimes Gina emerged victorious from her struggle with Mamie's pressing hospitalities, and succeeded in staying at home while everyone else went to the beach. (The sea was only a few minutes' walk across the dunes from the front door, but the beach they liked best for swimming and surfing was a short drive away.) She heard and winced at the little crack of impatience in Mamie's voice—"I suppose it's awfully impressive, to want to have your head buried in a book all day"—but that was worth incurring in exchange for the delicious freedom of having the house to herself for hours on end.

She didn't really spend all that time studying. She drifted from her books to the windows to the kitchen cupboards, eating whatever Mamie had left for her almost at once, and then spooning things out of expensive jars from the delicatessen (only enough so that no one could ever tell) and ferreting out the forgotten ends of packets of cakes and biscuits and nuts. She made herself comfortable with her bare legs up over the back of the collapsed chintz sofa, hanging her head down to the floor to read Becky's copies of *Honey* and *19*. In fact, she took possession of the lovely weather-washed old house with a lordly offhandedness that she never felt when the others were around. She ran herself copious baths perfumed with borrowed Badedas in the old claw-foot tub with its thundering taps. She tried on Mamie's lipstick and Becky's clothes. She browsed through the boys' bedrooms with their drawn curtains and heaps of sandy beach gear and frowsy smells of socks; she experimented with their cigarettes and once, for a dizzying hour, lost herself over a magazine of stunningly explicit sexual photographs she found stuffed down between one bed and the wall. (She didn't know whose bed it was, and the next time she felt for the magazine it was gone.) She sat in a deck chair on the sagging picturesque veranda whose wood had been rain-washed to a silvered gray, drinking Campari in a cocktail glass with a cherry from a jar and a dusty paper umbrella she'd found in a drawer; afterward, she cleaned her teeth frantically and chewed what she hoped were herbs from the garden so that no one would smell alcohol on her breath.

Once, after about an hour of this kind of desultory occupation, she happened to glance up through the open French windows from her dangling position on the sofa and was smitten with horror: she had been sure that they had all gone to the beach, but there was Tom, stripped to the waist, cutting the meadow of long grass behind the house with a scythe, working absorbedly and steadily with his back to her. Tom was particularly frightening: moody like his father, skeptical of the family charm, dissenting and difficult. Actually, he was the one whom Gina chose most often for her fantasies, precisely because he was difficult; she imagined herself distracting, astonishing, taming him.

Appalled to think what he might have seen of her rake's progress around his mother's house, she scuttled to her bedroom, where she spent the rest of the long day in what amounted to a state of agonized siege, not knowing whether he knew she was there, paralyzed with self-consciousness, avoiding crossing in



front of her own window, unable to bring herself to venture out of her room even when she was starving or desperate to use the loo. Tom came inside—perhaps for lunch, or perhaps because he'd finished scything—and played his Derek and the Dominoes album loudly, as though he believed he had the house to himself. Gina lay curled in a fetal position on the bed, worrying that he might open the door and find her, but worrying, too, that if he didn't find her, and then learned that they had shared the house for the whole afternoon without her even once appearing, he might think her—whom he barely noticed most of the time—insane, grotesque.

She wept silently into her pillow, wishing he'd leave, and at the same time mourning this opportunity slipping away, this afternoon alone in the house with him, which was, after all, the very stuff of her indefatigable invention. They might have conversed intelligently over coffee on the veranda; she might have accepted one of his cigarettes and smoked it with offhand sophistication; he, surprised at her thoughtfulness and quiet insight, might have held out his hand on impulse and led her off on a walk down among the dunes. And so on, and so on, until the crashing, inevitable, too-much-imagined end.

When Gina was at her unhappiest during that long fortnight, she wanted to blame her mother, and for short passionate private sessions she allowed herself to do so. Her mother had been so keen on her accepting Mamie's invitation, ostensibly because she was worried that Gina was studying too hard but really because of a surreptitious hope, which had never been put into words, though Gina was perfectly well aware of it, that Gina might get on with Mamie's boys. "Get on with": it wouldn't have been, not for her mother, any more focussed than that, a vague but picturesque idea of friendly comradeship, the boys coming, through daily unbuttoned summertime contact, to appreciate Gina's "character," as her mother optimistically conceived of it. Boys, her mother obviously thought, would be good for Gina. Apart from anything else, they might help to make her happy. But it would be disingenuous to make her mother solely responsible: when the holiday had been suggested, Gina had not refused. And this could only have been because she, too, had held out hopes, less innocent ones even, which appeared, in the event—as she should have known they would—to have been grotesquely, insanely, and characteristically misplaced.

There came another day of rain. At the end of a long afternoon of Monopoly and a fry-up supper, Mamie was suddenly visibly afflicted with panic like a trapped bird, shut up alone with her charm and a brood of disconsolate young ones, in the after-aroma of sausages and chips. When she proposed a surprise visit to friends who had a place twenty miles along the coast, she hardly paused to press Gina to join her, or Josh, either, who was building card houses on the table and said he didn't want to go. She and Becky and Tom set off with a couple of bottles of wine, some dripping flowers from the garden, and a palpable air of escape in their voices as they called back instructions and cautions, Tom shaking the car keys out of his mother's laughing reach, refusing to allow that she could manage his old car, which needed double declutching.

Gina was going home the next day. Mamie would run her into town to catch the train. Probably that was the explanation for the comfortable flatness she felt now; it didn't even occur to her to mind that Josh had stayed. She knew with a lack of fuss that it had nothing to do with her; he had stayed because he didn't feel sociable and because he had become idly fixated on a difficulty he was having with the card houses. The sound of the car driving away dissolved into the soft rustle of the rain, beneath which, if she pushed her hair back behind her ears to listen, she could also hear the waves, undoing and repairing the gravel of the beach. When Gina finished putting away the dishes, she sat down opposite Josh, watching him prop cards together with concentrating fingers; she was careful not to knock the table or even to breathe too hard. They talked, speculating seriously about why it was that he couldn't make a tower with a six-point base; he had built one right up to its peak from a three- and a four- and a five-point base, but for hours he had been trying and failing to do a six. Josh had a curtain of hair and a loose, full lower lip that made his grin shy and somehow qualified. There was silky fair beard growth on his chin. He was gentler than his brothers, and had a slight lisp.

There was a second pack of cards on the table, rejected for building towers because the corners were too soft. Gina picked it up and fiddled with it on her lap without Josh's noticing. The six-base tower came down with a shout of frustration, and Josh washed his hands in the mess of cards.

D'you want me to show you a card trick? Gina asked.

O.K., he said. Anything. Just don't let me begin another one of these.

Actually, I'm not going to do it, she said. You are. Put those cards out of the way. We'll use this older pack. It feels more sympathetic.

He was amiable, obliging, clearing the table, his eyes on her now, watching to see what she could do.

I'm going to give you power, she said. I'm going to make you able to feel what the cards are, without looking at them. You're going to sort them into red and black. It's not even something I can do myself. Look.

She pretended to guess, frowning and hesitating, dealing the top few cards face down into two piles. I don't know. Black, red; black, black, black; red, red. Something like that. Only I don't have this magic. I'll turn them over. See? All wrong. But you're going to have this power. I'm going to give it to you. Give me your hands.

He put his two long brown hands palm down on the table. She covered them with her own and closed her eyes, squeezing slightly against his bony knuckles, feeling under the ball of her thumb a hangnail loose against the cuticle of his. Really, something seemed to transfer between them.

There, she said briskly. Now you've got the power. Now you're going to sort these cards into black and red, face down, without looking. Black in this pile, red in this. Take your time. Try to truly feel it. Concentrate.

DINER
F.D.A.
F.D.A.
F.D.A.
F.D.A.
F.D.A.

Obediently, he began to deal the cards into two piles, doing it with hesitating, wincing puzzlement, like someone led blindfolded and expecting obstacles, laughing doubtingly and checking with her.

I have no idea what I'm doing here.

No, you have. You really have. Trust it.

He gained confidence, shrugged, went faster: black, red, black, black, red, black, red, red, red . . . Halfway through, she asked him to change it around: red cards on the right pile now, and black cards on the left. Readjust. Don't lose it. It's really just to keep you concentrating.

Then, when he'd put down his last card and looked at her expectantly, she swept up the two piles and turned one over in front of his eyes. So you see, if it's worked, this one should run from red to black . . . Look, there you are!

She spread the second pile, reversing it so that it seemed to run the other way. And, this one here, from black to red . . .

Oh, no. No! That's just too weird. That's really weird, man. How did you do that? Jesus! He laughed in delighted bafflement, looking from the cards up to her face and back again.

She was laughing, too, hugging her secret. Do you want me to do it again, see if you can guess? Only, hang on a sec, I need the loo.

He didn't notice that she took the second pack of cards with her to the bathroom to prepare them. ("Shall we use these newer ones, see if it works with them?") Gina couldn't quite believe that he didn't see what she was doing. She had worked it out for herself the first time the trick was done on her.

It's just spooky, he said in awe, shaking his head. It doesn't make sense. There's just no way I could be getting these right. You must be making me deal them right, somehow.

No, it's you, it's you, she insisted. I can't do it. It's only you.

He wouldn't let her tell him how it was done, although she was longing to explain. He was right: it was better to hold off the climactic revelation with its aftermath of gray; the power of the mystery he couldn't break was a warm pleasure, satisfying and sensual between them. They ran their eyes over each other's face in intimate connection, smiling. He brimmed with puzzlement, and she was replete with knowledge.

As they leaned toward each other across the table, she could smell his sweat and the nut-oil odor of his skin, which had been soaking up the sun all summer. She could suddenly imagine with vivid realism, as she hadn't been able to do in all her daydreams, what it would be like to be pressed up against him, existing in the orbit of that hot decent embrace. She could imagine how the male taste and smell of him could become known to her and comfortable, as familiar as her own. In fact, leapfrogging audaciously over all the things that hadn't happened between her and Josh, she found she was actually even imagining herself bored and constrained in his arms, hunting around for something more, pushing away from him. She was shocked at this intimation that the impossible dream of bliss might conceivably turn out, in some later phase of existence, not to be enough for her.

The moment slipped away. After the third time, they gave up the trick and played Mastermind and battleships, exchanging talk in low, lax, friendly voices. The others returned, crashing through the garden, tipsily exalted, looking around at their home, surprised that it seemed not to have changed in their absence. When Gina climbed between the sheets in her pajamas, she found the pleasure of the evening persisting, a soft surprising parcel under her lungs. She examined it, and thought that it was probably happiness, a small preparatory portion of the great ecstasies she supposed life must have in store for her.

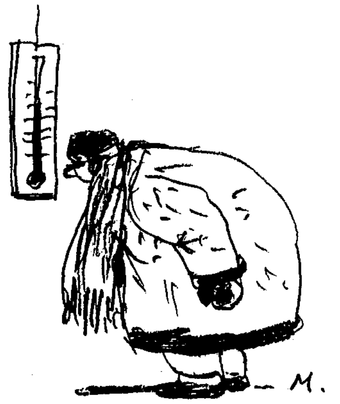
It was twenty-five years before she visited Wing Lodge again.

This time she was alone. She remembered that she had been there before, with Mamie, although she couldn't quite imagine why she had been staying with her; there had never been any real intimacy between their families. Dickie and Mamie had divorced not long afterward, and Mamie had died recently. One of the boys had drowned, years ago—she couldn't remember which. The visit now was uncharacteristic of Gina. She never went to stately homes or birthplaces; in fact, she gave ironic lectures at her university on the enthusiasm of the masses for traipsing humbly and dotingly around the houses where they would most likely—as recently as sixty years ago—have been exploited as estate hands or scullery maids. But then this was an unsettled time in her life, and she was doing uncharacteristic things. She had been divorced for five years, and now her new lover wanted to move in with her. On impulse, leaving her son with friends for the weekend, she had booked herself into a hotel and come down to this little town to be alone, to think.

She hadn't imagined that she would actually go inside Wing Lodge, although she had been aware, of course, that the town she had chosen to think in was the one where John Morrison, who remained her passion, had spent his last years. She had had a quixotic idea, perhaps, that by moving around in the streets he must have moved around in she might attain something of his clarity; needless to say, the streets remained just streets, full of cars and tourists, and, for someone used to London, there were disconcertingly few of them to explore. She had, with determined austerity, not brought any books away with her, imagining that not being able to read would concentrate her mind. But the habit of years was too strong to break overnight, and so, over drawn-out coffees in the wood-panelled tearoom, where the waitresses still wore white frilled aprons, she found herself reading the menu over and over, and then the ancient injunction against asking for credit in red calligraphy above the till, and then the discarded sports pages of a newspaper, rather than dwelling at last and with a new penetration on the purpose and shape of her life.

So it was in flight from herself, almost, and also because there simply wasn't that much else to do, that she eventually joined the little party of visitors being taken around Wing Lodge. She was a middle-aged woman now, tall and statuesque in a tan linen skirt and jacket, with a mass of thick dark curls in which new gray hairs were sprouting with a coarse energy that made her suspect that age was going to impose itself differently than she had envisioned: less entropy, more vigorous takeover. There were copies of her book about Morrison's novels in the little bookshop upstairs, but she wasn't going to own up to that; she followed the guide obediently about and listened with amusement to the way the wonderful works abounding in disruptive energy became, in the retelling, so much sad sawdust, so much argument, as Pound put it, for old lavender.

She wondered, too, whether the place was really arranged as it had been in Morrison's time. He and his wife had never had much money, even in the years of his critical success; and the couple was reported to have been indifferent to creature comforts. Friends had complained that although the conversation was excellent you never got a decent meal or a good night's sleep at Wing Lodge. Gina recognized one or two drawings that she knew Morrison had possessed, and a few things that he might have brought back from the East. But the rest must have come after he died, when his wife had inherited money from her family in America; it was then, perhaps, that she had turned Wing Lodge into this tasteful little nest. No doubt the frail, ladylike guide and her frail, ladylike, possibly lesbian companion, who presumably lived here quietly together on the days when they were not intruded upon by a curious public, had also added their bit of polish to the deep old charm.



In the study, where Morrison's writing table was set out with pens and notebooks, as if he had just this minute stepped out for a walk in the fields in search of inspiration, there was also a shallow locked glass case in which were displayed first editions of the novels and some of Morrison's longhand drafts, as well as the copies that his wife had typed up on her Olivetti, and on which Morrison had scribbled furiously in his dark soft pencil. Gina had handled his notebooks and manuscripts and was familiar with his process of composition.

When the others had moved on, she peered closely into the case at one of the notebooks. These longhand drafts were not difficult to read, although Morrison's handwriting was odd, with large capitals and crunched-up lowercase. She recognized the text immediately. It was the scene in "Winter's Day" when the middle-aged daughter declares her love for the doctor, in the house where her father is dying. They have left her father with the nurse for an hour, and the doctor is trying to persuade Edith to get some rest. A lamp is burning, although it is already light outside; they are surrounded by the overflow of chaos from the sickroom—basins and medicines and laundry. Edith tells the doctor, who is married, that she can't bear the idea that when her father is dead he will no longer come to visit. "Because we shan't have our talks—you could have no idea, because you're a man and you have work to do, of what these mean to me. My life has been so stupidly empty." She presses her face, wet with tears, against the woollen sleeve of his jacket. The doctor is shocked and offended that Edith's mind is not on her father. Also, he is not attracted to her: he pities her, with her plain looks, haggard with exhaustion, and bad teeth.

There were few corrections to this passage in the notebook. It was a kind of climax, an eruption of drama in a novel whose texture was mostly very still. But Morrison must have cut part of this scene in a later version. In the published book, all Edith said when she broke down was "Because we shan't have our talks . . . I will miss them." Gina's eyes swam with tears as she bent over the case, reading the original words. She was astonished. She never cried, she never got colds, so she didn't even have a tissue in her bag. Luckily, she was alone. She wiped her face on the back of her hand and decided not to follow the rest of the tour group upstairs to the bookshop. Instead, she made her way out into the exquisitely blooming back garden, and found a seat under a bower overgrown with Nelly Moser clematis and some tiny white roses with a sweet perfume.

Why did it move her so much, this scene of a woman relinquishing power over herself? It ought to disgust her, or fill her with rage—or relief, that a whole repertoire of gestures of female abasement was now, after so many centuries, culturally obsolete. No one would dream of using a scene like that in a novel these days. That wet face, though, against the rough woollen sleeve, sent Gina slipping, careering down the path of self-abandonment. (Was the sleeve still there in the published version? She couldn't at the moment remember for sure.) She could almost smell the wool and imagine its hairy texture against her mouth, although none of the men she had loved ever wore that kind of tweedy jacket, except her father, perhaps, when she was a little girl. It was sexual, of course, and masochistic: female nakedness rubbing up against coarse male fibre. There was the threat of abrasion, of an irritated reaction on the finer, more sensitized, wet female surface.

You could see how it all worked. You could rationally resist it, and you could even—and here was the answer, perhaps, to the question that had brought her down to Wing Lodge in the first place—feel sure that you would never be able to surrender yourself like that ever again. And yet the passage had moved her to unexpected tears. There was something formally beautiful and powerful and satisfying in it: that scene of a woman putting her happiness into a man's hands. Next to it, all the other, better kinds of power that women had nowadays seemed, just for one floundering moment, second best.

Gina sat for a long time. A bee, or some beelike insect, fell out of the flowers onto her skirt, and she was aware of the lady guide looking at her agitatedly from the French windows, probably wanting to close up the house. And there came to her, in a flood of regret for her youth, the memory of a card trick, the one where you secretly sorted the pack into black and red in advance so that your victim wouldn't be able to put a card down wrong. ♦

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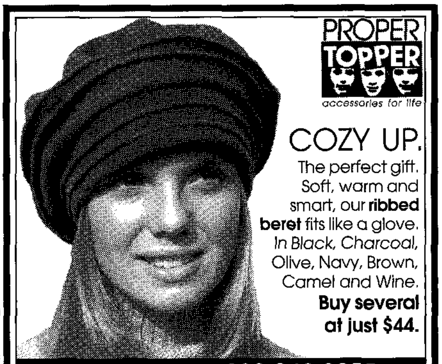

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THE CRITICS

A CRITIC AT LARGE

PHILLIS WHEATLEY ON TRIAL

In 1772, a slave girl had to prove she was a poet. She's had to do so ever since.

BY HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

It was the primal scene of African-American letters. Sometime before October 8, 1772, Phillis Wheatley, a slim African slave in her late teens who was a published poet, met with eighteen of the most influential thinkers and politicians of the Massachusetts Colony. The panel had been assembled to verify the authorship of her poems and to answer a much larger question: Was a Negro capable of producing literature? The details of the meeting have been lost to history, but I've often imagined how it all might have happened. Phillis walks into a room—perhaps in Boston's Town Hall, the Old Colony House—and stands before these New England illuminati with a manuscript consisting of twenty-odd poems that she claims to have written. She is on trial, and so is her race.

Wheatley's poems had been appearing in periodicals and newspapers in New England and Britain since she was fourteen. One of her adolescent works, "On Being Brought from Africa to America," displays her typical subject matter and the hallmarks of her early style—religious piety wrapped in heroic couplets. The eight-line poem has been widely anthologized in collections of African-American literature in this century, most recently in James G. Basker's "Amazing Grace: An Anthology of Poems About Slavery, 1660-1810" (Yale; $45). It is a modest and not particularly sophisticated paean to her Christian education, and expresses a forgiving, even grateful attitude toward human trafficking:

> 'Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
> Taught my benighted soul to understand
> That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:
> Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
> Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
> "Their colour is a diabolic die."
> Remember, *Christians*, *Negros*, black as *Cain*,
> May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

She had arrived in Boston on July 11, 1761, on board the Phillis, a slaver that was returning from Senegal, Sierra Leone, and the Isles de Los, off the coast of Guinea. Most likely a native Wolof speaker from the Senegambian coast, she was "a slender, frail, female child," naked except for a kilt made from "a quantity of dirty carpet," as a descendant of her owners wrote in 1834. She had lost her front teeth, and so was thought to be about seven or eight years old. Susanna Wheatley, the wife of a prosperous tailor and merchant, John Wheatley, acquired her as a house servant, and named her after the slave ship.

John and Susanna Wheatley had teenaged twins, Nathaniel and Mary, who were living at home when Phillis arrived. Phillis spoke no English, and Mary, apparently with her mother's encouragement, began to teach her to read, tutoring her in English, Latin, and the Bible. By 1765, Wheatley had written her first poem; in 1767, when she was thirteen or fourteen, the Newport *Mercury* published a poem that Susanna Wheatley submitted on her behalf. In 1770, when she was about seventeen, an elegy she wrote on the death of the Reverend George Whitefield, a popular English preacher who was a leader of the evangelical movement in England and America, was published in newspapers in Boston, Newport, New York, and Philadelphia. Whitefield had been the personal chaplain of an English philanthropist, Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon. Wheatley shrewdly apostrophized the Countess in the Whitefield elegy and sent her a letter of condolence with the poem enclosed. With the poem's publication in London, in 1771, Wheatley suddenly had a wide readership on both sides of the Atlantic.

As her literary reputation grew, however, so did doubts about her authenticity, and the Wheatleys, attempting to publish her manuscript, were unable to elicit the number of book orders that printers in those days required. Eighteenth-century philosophers like David Hume believed that blacks were a different species, and there was widespread incredulity at the idea of a black litterateur. It was John Wheatley who assembled the illustrious group of interrogators, hoping that they would support Phillis's claim of authorship, and that the opinion of the general public would follow.

Picture the eighteen men gathered in a semicircle. At the center was, no doubt, His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, the governor of Massachusetts. Hutchinson, a Colonial historian and a royal official, was born into a wealthy merchant family in Boston. He entered Harvard College at the age of twelve, where, because of his family's social position, he was ranked third in his class. (Even back then, grade inflation loomed on the Charles.) Following the Boston Tea Party, he went to London, "for consultations," and never returned.

Andrew Oliver, the colony's lieutenant governor, would have been seated on one side of Hutchinson. Oliver imprudently allowed himself to be publicly identified as a supporter of the Stamp Act of 1765, prompting angry crowds to ransack his house and uproot his garden. When, in 1774, Oliver had a stroke and died, commentators assumed that it was related to the political turmoil.

Quite a few men of the cloth were present. The Reverend Mather Byles was the minister of the Hollis Street Congregational Church, in Boston; he was

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

the grandson of Increase Mather and the nephew of Cotton Mather. As a young man, he had corresponded with Alexander Pope and Isaac Watts, and in 1744 he had published a book of verse, "Poems on Several Occasions." Like Hutchinson and Oliver, Byles was a Tory loyalist, and he lost his pulpit when Massachusetts finally rebelled. He was sentenced to banishment, later commuted to house arrest, for his loyalist views. (Byles called the sentry stationed just outside the house his "Observe-a-Tory.")

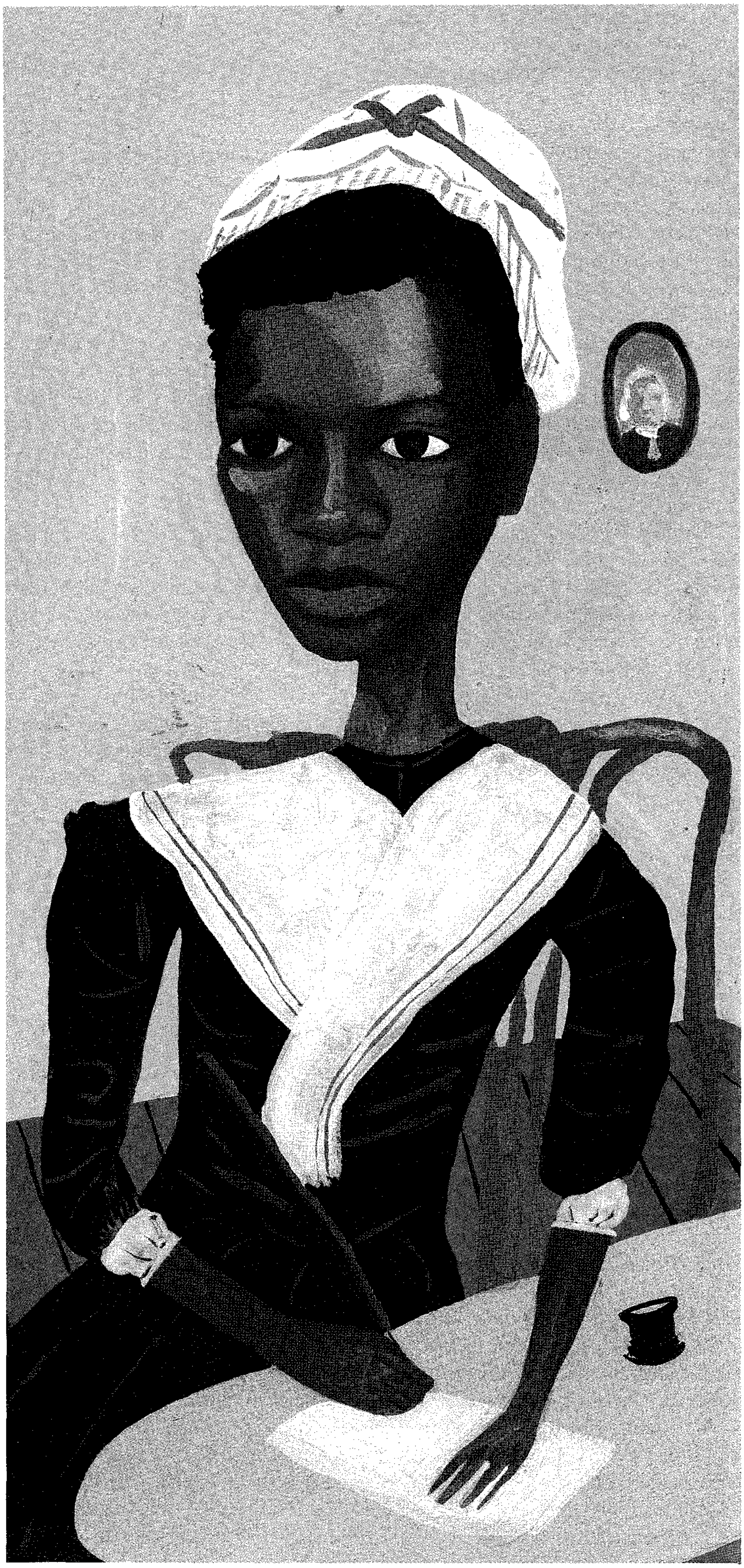
Others of the Wheatley witnesses, though, were to become prominent figures in the newly founded republic. Among them was John Hancock, the head of the House of Hancock, which had grown rich by trading in whale oil and real estate. Hancock was later the president of the Second Continental Congress and the first governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Nearly all the men present were Harvard graduates and a majority were slaveholders. One, Thomas Hubbard, had been a dealer in slaves; another, the Reverend Charles Chauncy, had attacked the Great Awakening, an evangelical movement that threatened the established religious order, because it allowed "women and girls; yea Negroes . . . to do the business of preachers." The group that Wheatley faced was not exactly an association for the advancement of colored people.

There is no transcript of what took place in that room. Was Wheatley given scansion tests? Quizzed on the Latin subjunctive? Asked to recite the Psalms? We'll never know. Whatever the nature of the exam, she passed it, and earned the letter of support that she and her master had hoped for:

> We whose Names are under-written, do assure the World, that the Poems specified in the following Page, were (as we verily believe) written by Phillis, a young Negro Girl, who was but a few Years since, brought an uncultivated Barbarian from *Africa*, and has ever since been, and now is, under the Disadvantage of serving as a Slave in a Family in this Town. She has been examined by some of the best Judges, and is thought qualified to write them.

Even after the validation of the esteemed Bostonians, no American publisher was willing to take on Wheatley's manuscript, and so Susanna Wheatley turned to English friends for



Wheatley's poems, Thomas Jefferson wrote, "are below the dignity of criticism."

help. The publishing climate in England was more receptive to black authors. The Countess of Huntingdon, though a slaveholder herself (she had inherited slaves in Georgia), had already, in 1772, shepherded into print one of the earliest slave narratives, by James Gronniosaw. Vincent Carretta, a leading scholar of eighteenth-century black transatlantic literature and an expert on Wheatley, has observed that the British market for black literature may have been indirectly created by a court ruling, in 1772, that made it illegal for slaves who had come to England to be forcibly returned to the colonies. Although the ruling stopped short of outlawing slavery in England, it encouraged an atmosphere of sympathy toward blacks.

Through the captain of the commercial ship that John Wheatley used for trade with England, Susanna engaged a London publisher, Archibald Bell, to bring out the manuscript. The Countess agreed to let Wheatley dedicate the book to her. An engraving of Wheatley appeared as the book's frontispiece, at the Countess's request.

"Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral, by Phillis Wheatley, Negro Servant to Mr. John Wheatley of Boston" was published in September, 1773. Five advertisements that ran in the London *Morning Post & Daily Advertiser* the month before pointed to the statement of the Boston panel as proof that Wheatley was the "real Author." The book's publication represented a significant moment in black literary achievement. Various black authors had published individual poems, but even these instances were rare. Jupiter Hammon, a slave from Long Island, had published the first of several poems in 1760. Francis Williams, a Jamaican who is said to have studied at Cambridge University, had caused a minor sensation when it was posthumously revealed that he had written an ode in Latin in 1759. Wheatley's book was widely reviewed and discussed in England and in America, where it became available in 1774. Voltaire wrote to a correspondent that Phillis Wheatley had proved blacks could write poetry.

SNOW MOON FLOWER

In this place of rice fields,
metrical mountains and little bubbling canals,
it was not the self against time
or the self blurred by flesh, it was the self
living without any palpable design.
Common egrets floated on broad bowed wings.
A rooster crowed at dawn and the body—
graceful, alert—slanted gently towards the sun.
In the night gloom, a ground spider jumped
around the shortwave radio,
on which a samisen played,
and fawn-like creatures ventured out of the pines,
observing in my windows a solitude
as pure as a bowl of milk.

But outside the gate of this place,
there was another mirror world,
connected only by a dark path of sticky stones,
where there were goat smells and little cries,
hooves pawing and flying beetles. No man could resist it.
No man could endure it. The long shadows
fell on the mind like nails in a plank,
taking one beyond the surface of things,
into the deepest places, not of man's griefs
but of man's truths, which cut deep,
if they did not tear us apart, like a field of thorn,
as the dark tops of the trees shone complacently
and a changing light filtered and breathed
against the lonely surface of everything.

—*Henri Cole*

While Phillis was in London, where she had been sent with Nathaniel Wheatley in the spring of 1773 to oversee the book's publication, she met the Earl of Dartmouth, who gave her five guineas to buy the works of Alexander Pope; Granville Sharp, the scholar and anti-slavery activist, who took her to the Tower of London; and Brook Watson, a future Lord Mayor of London, who gave her a folio edition of "Paradise Lost." Benjamin Franklin paid her a visit, which he mentions in a letter to his nephew Jonathan Williams, Sr. "Upon your Recommendation I went to see the black Poetess and offer'd her any Services I could do her," he wrote. "And I have heard nothing since of her." On the strength of this seemingly perfunctory visit, Wheatley decided to dedicate her second volume of poetry to Franklin. Even an audience with King George was arranged, although she had to cancel it when Susanna Wheatley suddenly fell ill and needed her care.

Within a month of the book's publication and Phillis's return to America, the Wheatleys freed her. (English reviewers, using Wheatley's book as a point of departure, had condemned the hypocrisy of a colony that insisted on liberty and equality when it came to its relationship to England but did not extend those principles to its own population.) Freedom meant that she became fully responsible for her literary career, and for her finances. In mid-October, she wrote a letter to David Wooster, the customs collector in New Haven, alerting him that a shipment of her books would soon arrive from England, and urging him to canvass among his friends for orders. "Use your interest with Gentlemen & Ladies of your acquaintance to subscribe also, for the more subscribers there are, the more it will be for my advantage as I am to have half the Sale of the Books." She continued, "This I am the more solicitous for, as I am now upon my own footing and whatever I get by this is entirely mine, & it is the Chief I have to depend upon. I must also request you would desire the Printers in New Haven, not to reprint that Book, as it will be a great hurt to me, preventing any further Benefit that I might receive from the Sale of my Copies from England."

In the spring of 1774, the British occupied Boston. Susanna Wheatley died the same year, and when John Wheatley fled the city Phillis moved to Providence, where John Wheatley's daughter, Mary, and her husband lived. With the outbreak of war, in April of 1775, Phillis's prospects dimmed considerably. A number of the people who had signed the attestation were dead, and the others who had earlier supported her, both Tories and Patriots, were more concerned with winning the war than with the African prodigy. But Wheatley lost no opportunity to cultivate powerful friends, and on October 26, 1775, she wrote to General George Washington at his headquarters in Cambridge, aligning herself with the Revolutionary cause:

SIR

I Have taken the freedom to address your Excellency in the enclosed poem, and entreat your acceptance, though I am not insensible of its inaccuracies. Your being appointed by the Grand Continental Congress to be Generalissimo of the armies of North America, together with the fame of your virtues, excite sensations not easy to suppress. Your generosity, therefore, I presume, will pardon the attempt. Wishing your Excellency all possible success in the great cause you are so generously engaged in, I am,

Your Excellency's most obedient humble servant,

PHILLIS WHEATLEY

The accompanying poem was nothing if not flattering:

One century scarce perform'd its
destined round,
When Gallic powers Columbia's fury
found;
And so may you, whoever dares
disgrace
The land of freedom's heaven-defended
race! . . .

Proceed, great chief, with virtue on
thy side,
Thy ev'ry action let the goddess guide.
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that
shine,
With gold unfading, WASHINGTON!
be thine.

On February 28, 1776, Washington responded:

MISS PHILLIS,

Your favor of the 26th of October did not reach my hands, till the middle of December. Time enough, you will say, to have given an answer ere this. Granted. But a variety of important occurrences, continually interposing to distract the mind and withdraw the attention, I hope will apologize for the delay, and plead my excuse for the seeming but not real neglect. I thank you most sincerely for your polite notice of me, in the elegant lines you enclosed; and however undeserving I may be of such encomium and panegyric, the style and manner exhibit a striking proof of your poetical talents; in honor of which, and as a tribute justly due to you, I would have published the poem, had I not been apprehensive, that, while I only meant to give the world this new instance of your genius, I might have incurred the imputation of vanity. This, and nothing else, determined me not to give it place in the public prints.

If you should ever come to Cambridge, or near headquarters, I shall be happy to see a person so favored by the Muses, and to whom nature has been so liberal and beneficent in her dispensations. I am, with great respect, your obedient humble servant.

GEORGE WASHINGTON

In the event, Washington overcame his fear of the imputation of vanity and, by means of an intermediary, secured publication of Wheatley's pentametric praise in the *Virginia Gazette,* in March of 1776.

By late 1776, Wheatley had moved back to Boston. In 1778, she married a black man named John Peters. Peters was a small-time grocer and a sometime lawyer about whom very little is known—only that he successfully applied for the right to sell spirits in his store, and that a Wheatley relative remembered him as someone who affected the airs of a gentleman. Meanwhile, the poet continued her efforts to publish a second volume. In 1779, she advertised six times in the Boston *Evening Post & General Advertiser,* mentioning that she intended to dedicate the book to Benjamin Franklin. The advertisements failed to generate the necessary number of subscribers, and the book was never published.

Wheatley's freedom had enslaved her to a life of hardship. Peters abandoned

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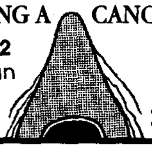

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her soon after she gave birth to their third child (the first two died in infancy). She placed her last advertisement in the September, 1784, issue of *The Boston Magazine* and died in December, at the age of thirty, poor and alone. Her baby died with her. Peters is thought to have sold the only copy of the second manuscript. A few years ago, one of the poems surfaced at Christie's, and sold for nearly seventy thousand dollars, but the full manuscript has never been recovered.

To her black contemporaries, Wheatley was a heroine. Jupiter Hammon published a laudatory poem entitled "An Address to Miss Phillis Wheatley Ethiopian Poetess, in Boston," in 1778. Hammon's poem echoed and approved of the sentiments expressed in "On Being Brought from Africa to America": "Thou hast left the heathen shore, / Thro' mercy of the Lord, / Among the heathen live no more, / Come magnify thy God." Wheatley encouraged the work of other black artists, such as Hammon and Scipio Moorhead, a well-known painter to whom she dedicated a poem. In letters to her best friend, Obour Tanner, a black woman she had met in Providence, Wheatley argued for the inherent right of blacks to be free. She corresponded with the English philanthropist John Thornton, a wealthy merchant and a friend of the Countess of Huntingdon. She used her fame and her acquaintance with political figures to complain bitterly about the human costs of the slave trade, as in a famous poem called "To the Right Honourable William, Earl of Dartmouth":

I, young in life, by seeming cruel fate
Was snatch'd from *Afric's* fancy'd
    happy seat:
What pangs excruciating must molest,
What sorrows labour in my parent's
    breast?
Steel'd was that soul and by no misery
    mov'd
That from a father seiz'd his babe
    belov'd:
Such, such my case. And can I then
    but pray
Others may never feel tyrannic sway?

And there is a letter Wheatley wrote about the evils of slavery to the Reverend Samson Occom, a Mohegan Indian minister in the Countess's circle. The letter was published several months after her manumission. It appeared in *The Connecticut Gazette* on March 11, 1774, and reads, in part:

> In every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle, which we call Love of Freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance; and by the Leave of our Modern Egyptians I will assert, that the same Principle lives in us.

In the half century following her death, Wheatley remained something of an icon in the abolitionist movement, and was frequently cited as proof of Africans' innate intellectual equality with whites.

At the same time, her popularity among the abolitionists brought her some formidable detractors. In "Notes on the State of Virginia," which was published in America in 1787, Thomas Jefferson dismissed Wheatley's poetry as undeserving of the name:

> Misery is often the parent of the most affecting touches in poetry. Among the blacks is misery enough, God knows, but no poetry. Love is the peculiar oestrum of the poet. Their love is ardent, but it kindles the senses only, not the imagination. Religion, indeed, has produced a Phillis Wheatley; but it could not produce a poet. The compositions composed under her name are below the dignity of criticism.

Phillis had plenty of experience—"misery enough"—and, thanks to the Wheatleys, training in spelling and composition. What she lacked, Jefferson wrote, was an animating intellect. "Epictetus, Terence, and Phaedrus, were slaves. But they were of the race of whites. It is not [the blacks'] condition then, but nature, which has produced the distinction." The authentication of Wheatley's authorship in 1772 missed the point, in Jefferson's view. The issue wasn't whether she was the genuine author but whether what she produced was genuine poetry.

The emergence, in the mid-eighteen-forties, of fugitive-slave authors, such as Frederick Douglass, rendered Wheatley's stylized rhymes passé. Under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison, the abolitionist movement was assuming an urgency and a stridency consonant with the angry realism of Douglass's voice. Wheatley disappeared from view, and when she reappeared, in the late nineteenth century, it was as a version of what Jefferson had made of her—a symbol of artificiality, of spiritless and rote convention. Unlike Douglass, who was embraced by the black literary community, she was a pariah, reviled for "On Being Brought from Africa to America," even though the poem belongs among her juvenilia. In 1887, Edward Wilmot Blyden, one of the fathers of black nationalism, wrote about her contemptuously, and the tone was set for the century to come.

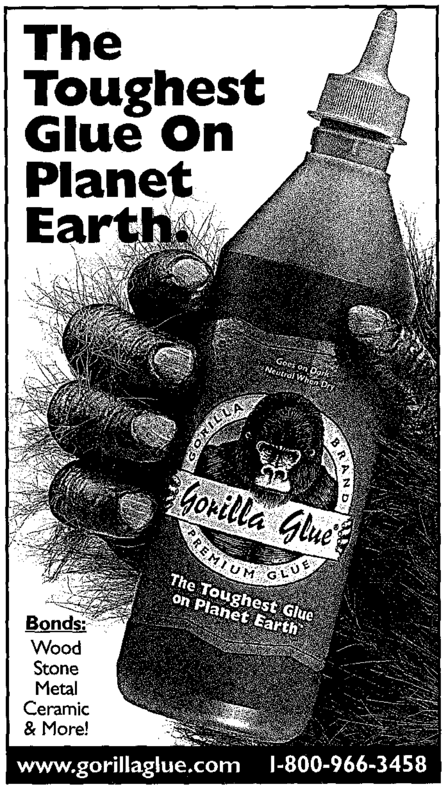
"One looks in vain for some outburst or even complaint against the bondage of her people, for some agonizing cry about her native land," James Weldon Johnson wrote about "On Being Brought from Africa to America," in 1922. Instead, one finds a "smug contentment at her own escape therefrom." Wallace Thurman, in 1928, called her "a third-rate imitation" of Alexander Pope: "Phillis in her day was a museum figure who would have caused more of a sensation if some contemporary Barnum had exploited her." Another black critic described her as "a clever imitator, nothing more."

By the nineteen-sixties, criticism of Wheatley had risen to a high pitch of disdain. Amiri Baraka, a founder of the Black Arts Movement, wrote in 1962 that Wheatley's "pleasant imitations of eighteenth-century English poetry are far and, finally, ludicrous departures from the huge black voices that splintered southern nights with their *hollers*, *chants*, *arwhoolies*, and *ballits*." In "Images of the Negro in American Literature" (1966), Seymour Gross wrote, "This Negro poetess so well fits the Uncle Tom syndrome. . . . She is pious, grateful, retiring, and civil." A few years later, the critic Addison Gayle, Jr., issued his own bill of indictment: Wheatley, he wrote, was the first among black writers "to accept the images and symbols of degradation passed down from the South's most intellectual lights and the first to speak with a sensibility finely tuned by close approximation to [her] oppressors." She had, in sum, "surrendered the right to self-definition to others." Phillis Wheatley, who had once been cast as the great paragon of Negro achievement, was now given a new role: race traitor.

The examples could be multiplied, as versions of the Jeffersonian critique have been taken up by successive generations of black writers and critics. Too black to be taken seriously by white critics in the eighteenth century, Wheatley was now considered too white to interest black critics in the twentieth. She was an impostor, a fraud, an avatar of inauthenticity. It's striking that Jefferson and Amiri Baraka, two figures in American letters who agreed on little else, could concur in the terms of their condemnation of Phillis Wheatley.

For Wheatley's critics, her sacrifices, her courage, her humiliations, her trials could never be enough. And so things came full circle: the sorts of racist suspicions and anxieties that first greeted Wheatley's writing were now directed at forms of black expression that failed the new test of cultural affirmation. The critics of the Black Arts Movement and after were convening their own interrogators, and they were a rather more hostile group than met that day in 1772. We can almost imagine Wheatley being frog-marched through another hall in the nineteen-sixties or seventies, surrounded by dashiki-clad figures of "the Revolution": "What is Ogun's relation to Esu?" "What are the seven principles of Kwanzaa?" "Santeria is derived from which African culture?" And, finally, "Where you gonna be when the revolution comes, *sista*?"

If Wheatley stood for anything, of course, it was the creed that culture did, or could, belong equally to everyone. That's an ideal that has been arraigned, interrogated, and prosecuted with unremitting zeal, but it remains worth defending. The republic of letters that Wheatley so yearned to join—one that might embrace the writing of both Jefferson and his African-American descendants—was based on common expression, *not common experience*. What would happen, then, if we ceased to stereotype Wheatley, to cast her in this role or that, but, instead, *read* her, with all the resourcefulness that she herself brought to her craft? That's the only way to let Phillis Wheatley take the stand. ◆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BOOKS

DANCER FROM THE DANCE

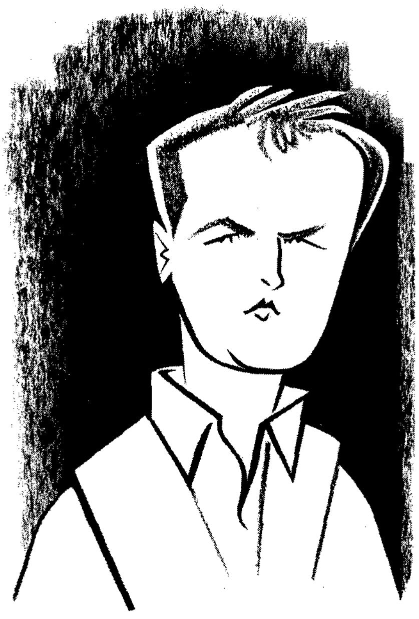
A novelist reimagines Nureyev.

BY LAURA MILLER

Born on a train speeding through Siberia, descended from the horsemen of Genghis Khan's Golden Horde, a charter member of the international jet set, and a dancer of stormy genius, Rudolf Nureyev was motion incarnate. That makes him a provocative choice as the subject of Colum McCann's third novel. McCann, the Irish-born author of "Songdogs" and "This Side of Brightness" (as well as two short-story collections), has fine instincts for character and situation, but he tends to get ensnared by a proclivity for static, ornamental prose. The sensational elements of Nureyev's life—his impoverished childhood in a dirt-floor shack during the Second World War, his defection from the Soviet Union in 1961, his ascent to stardom, his death in 1993 from AIDS, an illness he would not admit to having—are familiar enough that most of the suspense to be found in "Dancer" (Metropolitan; $26) comes from wondering which will prevail: Nureyevan kinesis or the inertia of pretty writing. You could say that the match goes to the Russian—McCann's prose is admirably free of curlicues this time around—but you could also call "Dancer" the result of a novelist finally shaking off the affectations of his youth.

The themes of "Dancer" include the nature of art—an unpromisingly shopworn and solemn topic—and also the bad character of artists, an equally commonplace motif but one that seldom fails to appeal. And there is meditation on the tough, bereft melancholy of Russia and its peoples, a subject of such high romanticism that it is always threatening to topple over into cliché or camp, and yet somehow it never does. The sentimentality to which McCann, the product of another nation of tragedians and exiles, is occasionally prone dissolves in the vast, irresistible emotional wash of Nureyev's stricken motherland.

"Dancer" is not, however, a novel about ballet or, for that matter, about the spectacular moments in Nureyev's biography. He may have single-handedly delivered the male ballet dancer from the shadow of the ballerina, but you won't find this mentioned in the novel. There's no attempt to capture, say, Nureyev's legendary performances with Margot Fonteyn, in the early sixties, or his dramatic defection at Le Bourget Airport or his death. McCann concerns himself with Nureyev's interior life, which often takes the form of imperatives, maxims, and to-do lists: "Eleven hours of rehearsal, one hour of slow barre work. Impossible to achieve the correct phrasing. You must desire the patience of a stonecutter." But even more of "Dancer" is given over to various people Nureyev knew, some historical, some imaginary, and the effect he had on them.



Colum McCann

ROBERT RISKO

The result is a mosaic of perspectives, including those of Nureyev's resentful sister, Tamara; the husband and the daughter of Nureyev's first dance teacher; a young Chilean dancer he befriends while studying at the Kirov school, in Leningrad; Margot Fonteyn; an English cobbler who makes the dancer's shoes; Nureyev's French housekeeper (who marries the shoemaker); nameless rent boys, rival dancers, and habitués of Leningrad's gay cruising park. Most enjoyably, there's Victor Pareci, a scene-making Venezuelan interior decorator who, on an evening in 1975, accompanies the dancer on a city-spanning bacchanal that begins at a celebrity-thick party in Nureyev's apartment in the Dakota, winds through night clubs and bathhouses, and concludes among a row of trucks parked in Manhattan's meat-packing district.

McCann recounts Victor's night with Rudi in a single thirty-six-page sentence, an inexpertly executed run-on. (With rather hamfisted symmetry, the novel's other one-sentence chapter describes the bachelor routine of the shoemaker, who is a sort of anti-Victor. He has Nureyev's perfectionism without his relish for life, while Victor has Nureyev's vitality without the sluice of art.) And yet those careening clauses work; they capture the giddy decadence of Manhattan's gay life at its apex. McCann's metaphors here are tight and true; a cocaine rush is a "small, immediate hammer of energy." Compare this to a line in "Songdogs," McCann's first novel, in which a pair of oversized work gloves are said to have "migrated" to a character's elbows, or one of the very few clunkers in "Dancer," in which we are told that a young Chilean dancer "spoke as if there were a tambourine in her throat," suggesting the distended neck of a Looney Toons character.

McCann's earlier novels are laden with such misbegotten figures. They come in two or three at a time and weigh everything down. "Dancer" is free of all that; McCann's hankering for muchness, it seems, has been sated by the novel's many voices. Now we get a better view of the author's strengths—for example, his tender, ecumenical attention to the human body, whether it is Fonteyn recalling how, in dancing, she has touched every part of Nureyev, "his clavicle, his elbow, the lobe of his ear, his groin, the small of his back, his feet," the chronicle of Victor's bathhouse orgy, or a catalogue of the physical disintegration of Soviet soldiers during the winters of the Second World War. "Our bodies are foul things to live inside," an elderly man thinks, but they also provide access to rapture.

Nureyev's dancing body, "a thing of the most captivating beauty," as one character puts it, elicits responses ranging from hatred to transcendental ecstasy, but most often he briefly restores people to life; he provokes a woman to seduce her unloved husband, and an elderly ex-ballerina to try on her mothballed tutu. When he escapes to the West, the family and friends he leaves behind suffer that extra portion of degradation administered to those associated with traitors to the post-Stalinist Soviet Union. They are not the only characters in "Dancer" to be deserted by this charming, selfish, driven man, but they feel it most keenly. He has run off with the last sliver of Russia's grandeur and left them, as his sister puts it, with "the simple reality that there is no soap and the handle of the toilet is broken."

The compensation that Nureyev offers, in his art but also in his general élan, is all the sweeter because it is ephemeral, and the characters in "Dancer" are forever attempting to calculate the exchange; how can the "momentary lightness" he bestows—grace in both senses of the word—ever be weighed against all that he has taken? A preoccupation with the loveliness of things that melt away even at the moment of possession can tend, like all ripe emotions, to cloy when expressed too directly. But fiction needn't be direct, and McCann never belabors a nostalgia that his Nureyev dismisses as "stale bread, soaked in vodka and tears." The better artist learns to step lightly, keep moving, and leave the dazzled audience to sort it out for themselves. ♦

CORRECTION OF THE WEEK

An article on Nov. 10 about animal rights referred erroneously to an island in the Indian Ocean and to events there involving goats and endangered giant sea sparrows that could possibly lead to the killing of goats by environmental groups. Wrightson Island does not exist; both the island and the events are hypothetical figments from a book (also mentioned in the article), "Beginning Again," by David Ehrenfeld. No giant sea sparrow is known to be endangered by the eating habits of goats.

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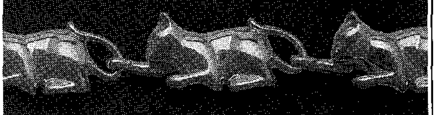

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BOOKS

GLORIOUS FOOD

Rediscovering a culinary classic.

BY FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY

In a small town in eastern France in the eighteen-thirties, the nation's most celebrated gastronome, Dodin-Bouffant, mourns the death of his cook. Alongside him are his three favorite dining companions, equally bereaved by the passing of the culinary genius who helped create Dodin-Bouffant's renown as "the Napoleon of gourmets, the Beethoven of cooking." During the grievous months in which Dodin-Bouffant, a retired magistrate, interviews candidates to fill the vacancy in his kitchen, the four gourmets have to content themselves with the indiscriminately massacred trout and dishonored fowl served up by their local café: sad fare to men who are used to consuming, as mere *amuse-gueules* before a fifteen-course meal, "mushroom and shrimp jellies, tiny preserved trout stuffed with tarragon and chopped olives . . . minute cold boned thrushes, larded with layers of anchovy, small tubs of roe pickled with cloves . . . iced eels stuffed with pounded prawns."

These voluptuaries are the main characters of Marcel Rouff's diverting novel "The Passionate Epicure" (Modern Library Food; $11.95; translated from the French by an Englishman who used the pseudonym Claude), which is loosely based on the life of the gastronome Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826). Unlike the amiable gentleman-scholar whose book "Physiologie du Goût" remains the most enduring classic of culinary writing, the fictional Dodin-Bouffant is a Robespierre of the dinner table. His exacting gustatory judgments have disqualified hundreds of prominent men from supping at his house. He has ostracized one candidate "for not having recognized in the cream of a cauliflower sauce the exotic caress of a pinch of nutmeg," and banished another for downing a glass of Pommard after dessert. So the three bons vivants who have the good fortune to remain recipients of Dodin-Bouffant's hospitality are overjoyed when a new culinary superstar, Adèle Pidou, passes the tyrant's gruelling scrutiny and is hired as his chef. They resume their blissful epicureanism, dining on "an uninterrupted dream of veal-birds with scented stuffings, unbelievable legs of mutton under the raised skin of which lurked prodigious forcemeat balls, fricassees which made [one] want to live for ever, sheeps' tongues 'in curl papers' (*en papillotes*)."

For Marcel Rouff, patriotism was edible.

Alas, Adèle Pidou's very genius, her ability to create that platonic ideal of "absolute and perfect cooking" which it is Dodin-Bouffant's goal in life to savor, catapults her to dangerous fame. An illustrious epicure, the Prince of Eurasia, invites Dodin-Bouffant to dinner, hoping to be invited back, in order to sample Adèle's creations. A culinary duel ensues: the Prince offers his guest a dinner of nearly sixty dishes and more than thirty wines and liqueurs. The irascible Dodin-Bouffant, deciding to teach the flamboyant foreigner a lesson in bourgeois frugality, retaliates by offering the Prince a four-course meal whose pièce de résistance consists of France's most rustic, down-home fare—a pot-au-feu. Outraged at first by the sight of "the coarse lackeys' dish," which he deems an "insult offered to his rank," the Prince finds that Adèle's version of it is no ordinary food:

> The beef itself, lightly rubbed with saltpetre and then gone over with salt, was carved into slices of a flesh so fine that its mouth-melting texture could actually be seen. The aroma it gave forth was not only that of beef-juice smoking like incense, but the energetic smell of tarragon with which it was impregnated and the few, very few, cubes of transparent, immaculate bacon in the larding. The rather thick slices, their velvety quality guessed at by every lip, rested languidly upon a pillow made of a wide slice of sausage, coarsely chopped, in which the finest veal escorted pork, chopped herbs, thyme, chervil. . . . But this delicate triumph of pork-butchery, cooked in the same broth as the beef, was itself supported by ample cuts from the breast and wing fillets of farm chickens, boiled in their own juice with a shin of veal, rubbed with mint and wild thyme. And, to prop up this triple and magnificent accumulation, behind the white flesh of the fowls (fed exclusively upon bread and milk), was the stout, robust support of a generous layer of fresh goose-liver simply cooked in Chambertin.

So transcendent is the pot-au-feu, in fact, that the Prince decides to seduce Adèle into his own employ. Dodin-Bouffant's ruses to retain her kindle the remainder of the plot, while a moral lesson is provided by his acid critique of the foreigner's ostentation.

Marcel Rouff, who wrote "The Passionate Epicure" in the early nineteen-twenties, was a versatile belletrist who also published a biography of Chateaubriand and was the co-author of a celebrated twenty-eight-volume guide to the cuisines of France, "La France Gastronomique." His novel, which offers numerous mouth-watering descriptions of French fare, has been out of print for several decades, and is a considerable curiosity: it is the only fictional work I can think of in which culinary creations become the heroes and heroines, overwhelming any human characters with the vitality and lush charisma of their presence. The novel also documents a pivotal moment in the history of gastronomy: in the de-

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

cades following the French Revolution, the art of fine eating, once confined to the households of the aristocratic élite, was democratized throughout Europe by the ascendance of bourgeois gastronomy and by the growing prominence of the chef as a public star—a phenomenon perfectly exemplified by Dodin-Bouffant and his treasured Adèle Pidou.

There are serious differences, however, between this fictional gourmand and the man who inspired him. Brillat-Savarin, who was a deputy to the National Convention of 1789 and left France at the beginning of the Terror, was an adventurous traveller and the author of several erudite books on economics and archeology; gastronomy was only one of many beloved avocations. Rouff's Dodin-Bouffant is a far more limited fellow; obsessed by little else than the perfection of his next quenelles, he is less a civilized hedonist than a provincial fetishist, and his monomania occasionally rouses our impatience rather than our appetite. Rouff might also have done well to take his tonal clue from the sharply ironic, mock-heroic timbre of "Physiologie du Goût." His own style, in contrast, tends to the elegiac and the polemical, as when he claims that great cuisine should be put on a par with great painting, sculpture, and music, that "Dodin-Bouffant is a gourmet as Claude Lorrain is a painter, as Berlioz is a musician."

But, as this choice of artists indicates, "The Passionate Epicure" is above all a patriotic book. In its dénouement, Dodin-Bouffant pays for his excesses by suffering a bad case of gout and is ordered by his doctor to take a cure at Baden-Baden. Having painfully endured the "Teutonic rubbish" of German food, he decides, upon coming home, to end his life in "the comfortable, broad, placid rapture of his blessed province," smugly cultivating "the twin gods of the hearth and of French cookery." *Vive la France!* A broad blue-white-and-red flag waves over this eccentric divertissement. "The Passionate Epicure" may incite readers to the pleasures of the table the way the best erotica incites readers to the joy of sex: it makes you long for equal virtuosity. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Samaritan, *by Richard Price (Knopf; $25).* For more than two decades, in gaunt, endlessly alert prose, Price has embraced areas of the city which have most novelists rolling up their car windows. Here Ray Mitchell, a New Jersey schoolteacher who has quit his job writing for a schmaltzy TV show and now tries to sell ghetto kids on the charms of creative writing, answers his door and gets his skull bashed in. Ray—whether out of fear or shame—refuses to say a word about what has happened to him, but, digging in his past, the investigating cop finds plenty to give her pause: a coke habit, a neglected daughter, and a recent affair with a drug dealer's wife. This is a crime in which the victim is the real mystery. Giving new meaning to the term "inner city," Price yields up not just the familiar, blanched moonscape of urban blight but the inner lives and jackhammering hearts of those who pace and patrol it.

The Emperor of Scent, *by Chandler Burr (Random House; $24.95).* A French perfumer, asked to describe a particular scent molecule, declares, "It smells of the woman who neglects herself." It's precisely this pungent leap from chemistry to metaphor that Burr negotiates so well in his fascinating and lucid book about the sense of smell. No one really knows how the nose works. For the person who figures it out, a Nobel prize surely waits, along with the lucrative gratitude of the multinational perfume companies. Burr's candidate is Luca Turin, a London-based research scientist whom he presents as a Continental rogue, unfettered polymath, and pure sensualist. Turin is good company, and his "vibrational" theory of smell neatly upends conventional thinking, by claiming that the nose is the body's spectroscope and analyzes molecules by electron bond rather than by shape. As both the author and the subject admit, the evidence is still preliminary, but the details of Turin's work unfold like a revelation. For his part, Burr does a fine job of turning both the science and the academic jockeying around a possible publication in *Nature* into a pulse-racing affair.

Dorian, *by Will Self (Grove; $24).* Subtitled "An Imitation," this reworking of "The Picture of Dorian Gray" transposes the story to a nineteen-eighties London of artists, aristos, junkies, and feverish promiscuity. The portrait is now a video installation, "Cathode Narcissus," and its original, Dorian, a beautiful, blank, omnisexual monster who remains immune to the AIDS epidemic, which claims most of the other characters. Mapping Wilde's era onto Thatcher's makes Self's grungy style incongruously mannered ("Oh jolly good, such a *bore*, smack"), as if Nancy Mitford and Johnny Rotten had decided to collaborate. The novel's sub-Wildean epigrams ("A witticism is merely the half-life of an emotion"), the ceaseless talk, and the preordained plot preclude any satisfying development. Self's bad-boy career, like his hero's, now spans slightly more than a decade. Perhaps in an attic somewhere he keeps a novel that displays the depth and maturity that are absent here.

Cathedrals of the Flesh, *by Alexia Brue (Bloomsbury; $24.95).* This entertaining picaresque chronicles the author's mostly naked reconnaissance of the world's public baths, from cavernous marble Turkish *hamams* and smoky Helsinki saunas to militantly hot Moscow *banyas* and a New York bathhouse of dubious hygiene. Between fierce scrubbings and whippings with birch twigs, Brue stealthily observes her fellow-bathers: jaded Russians (commenting on the decline of *banyas,* one says, "Stalin very bad man, so bad *banyas*"), fleshy Brooklynites discussing linoleum, and Romanian strippers who refuse to take off their swimsuits at a Japanese hot spring. Brue's depiction of herself as a bumbling innocent abroad isn't entirely believable, but her approach to other cultures is refreshingly humble, and her devotion to the pleasures of bathing with strangers makes a seductive case for "skinship," in which, naked together in the same water, "you do away with all the normal social barriers in life."

ON TELEVISION

WESTERN EXPOSURE

The WB expands its family practice.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

Now that the phrase "jump the shark" has entered the culture and given us a name for the point at which a TV series has peaked and starts heading downhill—the phrase is a reference to the episode of "Happy Days" when Fonzie, for some reason, attempted to water-ski over a shark—we're all hyperaware of the moment when things go sour (an element of preposterousness is often involved) and our loyalty is severed. Most TV shows, unless they've been prematurely cancelled, have a natural life span, and yet we take their demise personally: here we are, willing to show up week after week for years—how dare they decide to stop working on our relationship! Then there are the inverse moments, when a show unexpectedly succeeds in capturing our loyalty, or at least in heightening our attention. (Right now, of course, everyone's loyalty awaits deployment to the twenty-four-hour news networks if there is a war—something CNN seems almost to be gunning for, as it were, with the daily "Showdown: Iraq" hour and its theme music full of fateful nervous energy.)

I had been watching the WB's Monday-night family drama "Everwood" off and on since it began last September when such a moment came, a few weeks ago. (The episode, it turns out, was a rerun from October.) Two fathers—rival doctors in a small town, whose teen-age children are friends—had driven together to collect the two kids, who had gone AWOL from school one day and found themselves out late, with no way to get home. En route, each father spoke of how he would deal with his child. And then each did the opposite of what he said he'd do—the hard-nosed dad, who said that kids can smell fear in their parents and will take advantage of it, let his daughter know that he was just glad she was all right, and the dad intent on communicating with his son was left mute when his son angrily brushed by him, saying, "I'll be in the car." The men said one thing and did another, and you believed both. It wasn't a huge moment, but it was a complicated, memorable one that made you tip your hat to the show's writers.

One of the better shows that premièred last fall—some of the upcoming midseason replacements, at first viewing, already look more promising than most of the series that came out of the gate in September—"Everwood" was created by Greg Berlanti, who for several years was the head writer and executive producer of the WB teen drama "Dawson's Creek." Treat Williams plays its central character, Andrew Brown, a world-renowned New York City neurosurgeon, who performs miracles while neglecting his wife, Julia (Brenda Strong), and their two children, the fifteen-year-old Ephram (Gregory Smith) and the eight-year-old Delia (Vivien Cardone). We get an idea of his arrogance at the beginning of the first episode, when, during a consultation with a patient, he looks at a brain scan and says, "Glioblastoma multiforme. I like to call it the Great White of brain tumors." He's Ahab, and he's going to get that sucker—and don't expect him home for dinner. But when his wife dies everything changes, and Dr. Brown suddenly realizes what's important. He decides to move his family to Everwood, a small town in the mountains of Colorado, and open up a free practice.

"Everwood" has a few things in common with "Northern Exposure," in that it's about a New York doctor in the boonies, but in "Northern Exposure" the doctor wasn't there by choice, and everyone in his town, including the town itself, seemed pixillated. (Actually, the show's premise is closer to that of last year's ill-fated "The Education of Max Bickford," the CBS drama in which Richard Dreyfuss played a middle-aged college professor whose wife died in a car accident and who was left alone with their two children in his charge.) Everwood, the town and the series, is more earnest, and often more sappy. The show's opening credits include rough-hewn, sepia-toned drawings of the actors, and the theme music has a soaring, Rocky Mountain-high violin line. And many of the episodes begin and end with a voice-over by Irv (John Beasley), the school-bus driver and local fount of wisdom and loving-kindness—a device that has yet to add anything substantive to the show but only deflates it with spiritual gobbledygook. In one episode, Irv, talking about the beauty and utility of plants—the local florist has just died—says that they are "God's most alluring foot soldiers." At the end of another episode, he waxes teleological—you know, the whole giveth-and-taketh-away thing: "When things are working right in the universe, a loss of innocence is usually followed, in time, by an increase in humanity. Time is funny like that. For everything it robs us of, it grants us something." Honey, giveth me the remote. (Beasley plays a more articulate version of the Michael Clarke Duncan character in "The Green Mile." It seems to be the lot of black actors of a certain age and build and voice to play blue-collar workers who also happen to be holy.)

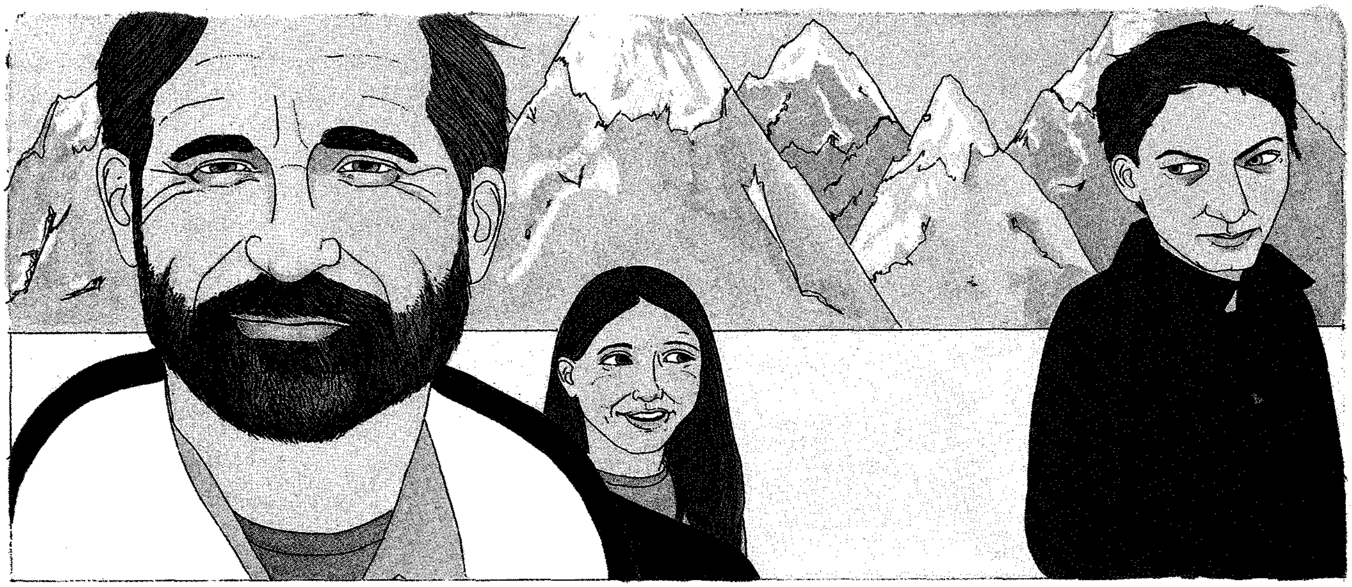
Once you get past "Everwood" 's homiletic aspects, though, the show has some real charm. The WB has almost cornered the market on a particular kind of family series that appeals to teen-agers and, to some extent, to their parents, and, in some cases, to both at the same time—"Gilmore Girls" is the rare show that almost-teen-age girls will allow their mothers to watch with them. The shows are wholesome, but they don't, for the most part, pander, and they appeal to that part of all of us that is still trying to figure out and possibly repair our own family. (If you care to have an extended wallow in unconventional family life à la the WB but are busy on weeknights, you can settle in for a three-hour block of reruns of "Smallville," "Everwood," and "Gilmore Girls" every Sunday.) In a way, a suddenly-single-parent drama like "Everwood" has a dramatic advantage over the intact-family scenario, because the children and the remaining parent are forced to come smack up against each other—they can no longer hide in the convenient bustle and hum of everyday family dysfunction. And, to make things worse for the kids (but better for the viewers), it's always the "wrong" parent who dies—at least, this is what the kids can be counted on to say at some point when the surviving parent is feeling most vulnerable and inadequate.

Ephram, Dr. Brown's son, is wonderfully played by the nineteen-year-old Gregory Smith. He, as much as, if not more than, Treat Williams, is the heart of the show. Williams is beginning to grow on me, but his face, with its hooded brow, is hard to see into, and the distracting Wooly Willy beard that his character sprouted upon arrival in Everwood at first made watching him an effort that interrupted your pleasure and concentration—like having to look for a golf ball in the woods. Ephram is in love with Amy Abbott (Emily VanCamp), and she is drawn to him, too, but she already has a boyfriend, Colin, who happens to be in a coma in a Denver hospital, after a Fourth of July joyride with Amy's brother ended in an accident. (In last week's episode, Colin came home—he was operated on successfully by the amazing Dr. Brown—but now he can't remember anything or anyone, including Amy.) Ephram is in pain, and it shows all over his face, and in the way he moves. If you saw him walking down the street, you'd think, That boy needs a mother, and you'd want to pull him toward you. His very guardedness is expressive, and despite his efforts to armor himself—you can see him close down in self-protection when he's around his father—the rage and the sadness and the sweetness come through. Smith looks like a real teen-ager, too, not a TV one; he's neither geeky nor bright-eyed and buff.

The other pleasant casting surprise of "Everwood" is Tom Amandes, who plays Dr. Harold Abbott, Amy's father. Dr. Abbott has an unfortunate personality—his way of welcoming Dr. Brown to Everwood is to tell him that he's in his parking space. He goes out of his way to make sure that he'll be disliked, and then he worries about being disliked. He wrestles with his prickliness and rigidity; and when he manages to override his own worst instincts—the sarcasm, the stubbornness (both of which are pretty amusing, actually)—he has a real sparkle. He has a nice, crackly voice, too; I'll bet he does a good Jimmy Stewart imitation. In what might be considered too neat a twist, his mother, Edna (Debra Mooney), an entertainingly crusty, motorbike-riding old broad, works as Dr. Brown's nurse. And *she's* married to the saintly Irv.

With its mildly quirky overlay, "Everwood" also sometimes recalls "Picket Fences," which was set in a quirky small town in Wisconsin. (Berlanti, who is thirty, has said that that show and "Northern Exposure" were two of his favorites.) "Everwood" may have a formula, but it doesn't lean on it too heavily; it uses the formula well, as a way of getting at the characters' emotions. Someone told me, the other day, that he had watched an episode of "Everwood" but was embarrassed to admit it. The WB should take that as good news: when you feel embarrassed by a show, you almost always come back for more.

A whole new wave of reality-TV shows came slithering up the beach last week: Fox's "Joe Millionaire," ABC's "The Bachelorette" and "Celebrity Mole" (no, it's not about Cindy Crawford), and the WB's "High School Reunion" and "The Surreal Life," in which former celebrities live together in a "Big Brother"-like arrangement. (And then there's "Watch NBC Lose Money," otherwise known as "Friends.") "Joe Millionaire" was the big jaw-dropper, and the big ratings winner. Twenty cookie-cutter-pretty women began their efforts to win over a California construction worker who was pretending to be the recipient of a fifty-million-dollar windfall and the owner of the French château where the show was filmed. The question is, Will the "winner" still "love" him when she finds out that he makes nineteen thousand dollars a year? Probably not, given the stated desire of most of these women to be princesses and to live a fairy-tale existence. As they lined up to meet their prince, some of the women shook his hand and let it go at that, and some of them, wanting to make more of an impression, had a strategic opening gambit. One started mauling his palm. Was she looking for his life line, or was she taking a cue from Rhett Butler, who could tell from Scarlett's rough palms that she had lied to him—everything was *not* all right at Tara. I don't know how you get to be a princess, but I have news for one of the women: I'm pretty sure that asking a guy "Do I have tangerine in my teeth?" isn't going to do the trick. ♦



Rocky Mountain blues: Treat Williams, Vivien Cardone, and Gregory Smith start over in small-town Colorado.

LARA TOMLIN

THE CURRENT CINEMA

TROUBLE IN THE STREETS

"City of God" and "Divine Intervention."

BY ANTHONY LANE

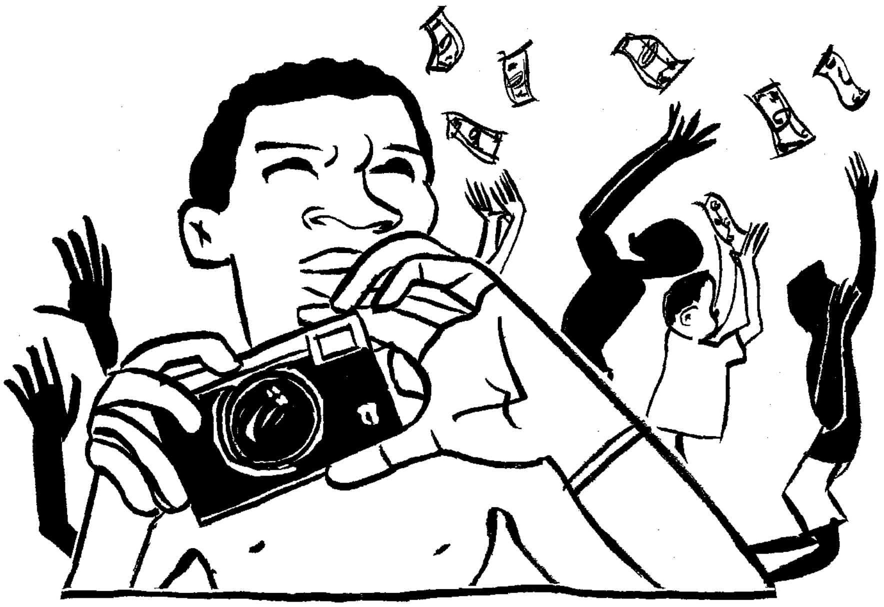
There was a lot of noise about "City of God" when it played at the Cannes Film Festival last year, and it now bursts into America waving a fully loaded nomination for the Golden Globes. I don't envy the judges for Best Foreign Language Film, who may be fearing that, if they hand the award to anything else, they will end up in a dark alley without any toes. Here is a movie—set in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, and directed by Fernando Meirelles—that doesn't know the meaning of peace.

The action begins with a group of kids chasing a chicken. There are many impressive performances in "City of God," but none so forthright, so Method-based in the intensity of its cluck and scoot, as that given by this scrawny broiler. At one point, the camera literally gets to *play* chicken, descending to beak level. Meirelles has a seething cast of characters and sees no reason that any of them, flesh or fowl, should be denied their place in the sun. We are thus introduced, in the opening minutes, to distinguished young gentlemen bearing the names of Shaggy, Rocket, Benny, Goose, Li'l Dice, and other sobriquets that I have, until now, associated purely with the rarefied social milieu of Top Cat.

Just to thicken the brew, each of them is traced over many years, from the nineteen-sixties to the eighties, and is played by successive actors. Our narrator, for example, is Rocket, incarnated first by Luis Otávio and then by Alexandre Rodrigues. He is as close as the movie comes to a presiding conscience, pulling back from the lip of the violence, and finally winding up as in-house photographer to the killing crowd, who are thrilled to see their faces and firearms on the front page of a newspaper. His success is one of the movie's false notes; photographers tend to get too sweet a deal in headlong movies, licensed to stay reflective, or romantic, while all around are cutting loose, and Rocket duly earns our affection by trying to win that of Angelica (Alice Braga), a beauty on the beach. But Meirelles is not a director with time or space for women. He can do chicken but not chicks, and his real specialty is the cock of the walk.

None strut more proudly than Li'l Dice (Douglas Silva), who grows up—or, at any rate, increases in size and sideburns—to be Li'l Zé (Leandro Firmino da Hora). Zé wants the neighborhood to himself, and the meat of the movie is his struggle for control of the local drug trade, in the company of his good friend Benny (Phelipe Haagensen). With his serious spectacles and his comic golden perm, Benny is the most winning character on display, all the acquired savagery in him half tamed—but only half—by the innate, girl-pulling ease of his demeanor. The other kids are not sketches or cartoons, but they are conceived almost entirely as force fields, spreading their devastation without a care either in or for the world.

All of this is filmed with a jumping, insolent giddiness that is meant to give the protagonists a run for their money. One murder is committed during a communal dance, under palpitating strobes; another is photographed from the back of a moving car, as a teen-ager races between rows of houses, only to be hobbled and laid low by the pursuing cops. Those houses make grim scenery: cheap shacks erected neatly, like prison huts, and framed against a sky of hot ochre, as if dirt kept getting into the lens. What I think of as the "Matrix" shot, a lone figure frozen while the camera circles around him, has travelled quickly from novelty to cliché, but Meirelles just about keeps it alive by using it to track the passage of time. Faced with a bunch of thugs, Rocket stops dead; we whip around him, and by the end of the whip they are all fifteen or twenty years younger, playing soccer. This is no country for old men.



Alexandre Rodrigues plays Rocket, a photographer from the streets of Rio.

TOM BACHTELL

Audiences must decide to what end this prodigious show of energy is being directed. Are the boys of the favela truly honored by the suggestion that their impoverished lives are richer, in both speed and sensation, than anything that we coddled souls dare dream of? That was certainly the kick that "City of God" delivered on a first viewing; what I wasn't prepared for was the rate at which the experience cooled down. A few days later, you feel untouched by the film. Compared with Buñuel's "Los Olvidados," another tale of a gang with little to live for, Meirelles's picture is so keen to brandish its social wrath, and its spirits are so rampagingly high, that the bruises it inflicts barely last a night. Only in one scene does it extend to greatness, as Li'l Zé goes after the Runts. The Runts are small boys who rifle and smash, so Zé traps a brace of them and asks one kid where, by way of a caution, he would choose to be shot: hand or foot. (He might as well be offering breast or leg at Sunday lunch, and his tone encapsulates the throwaway terror in which the movie deals—sacks of guns being doled out like candies and snatched up with equal glee.) The child, faced with so dire an option, curls, contorts, and turns back into, well, a child. He explodes into tears, sounding less like a promising hoodlum than like an infant who fell off a swing. For once, "City of God" rises above its own brilliance, its ominous delight in those who are unfettered by morality, and takes the trouble to show that they are in fact not free but utterly lost, stranded in Purgatory and heading downward fast. That is a spiritual judgment, not a political one, and it suggests what this brutal and furiously stylish film might have become. Until he weeps, that boy looks like someone else's problem, and someone else's son; what we need to believe is that he could be ours.

In a good week for dry landscapes, Elia Suleiman's "Divine Intervention" begins with rocks and olive trees. Up a gnarled hill, panting through the heat, comes Santa Claus, spilling gifts, and pursued by a group of surly boys who look as if they would get on well with the Runts. The scene closes in violence, and a title appears onscreen: "Nazareth." Welcome to the land of blood and irony.

Suleiman is a Palestinian with a sense of humor as parched as his settings, and "Divine Intervention" is a comedy so spare and, for the most part, so cautious that you may ask what there is to laugh about. We follow a nameless man (Nayef Fahoum Daher), content with his coffee and cigarettes, who tries to keep order in a rancorous neighborhood. He winds up in the hospital, and receives visits from his son, E.S.—played by Suleiman himself, who is never less than lugubrious. E.S. is in love with a fellow-Palestinian, but she lives in Ramallah and he lives in Jerusalem, so their only contact comes in the parking lot of an Israeli checkpoint; they hold hands, and their fingers and palms are filmed as tenderly as sex. In his one puff of rebellion, E.S. blows up a red balloon and floats it through the sunroof of his car toward the Israeli guards, who are alarmed to see that it bears the smiling, swelling face of Yasir Arafat.

For long periods, the film remains silent, as though in tribute to Jacques Tati and Robert Bresson. It is the tense, trembling silence of a man about to fall over, or of a grenade with the pin pulled out. Occasionally, music flares into life; wait for the ecstatic beat as E.S.'s lover (played by a beautiful journalist named Manal Khader) marches straight at the checkpoint in a sleeveless pink dress, whereupon the soldiers, disarmed like medieval knights by so fair a maid, let her go sailing through. When Suleiman showed the film in Ramallah, the audience applauded at the exact moment of her crossing. Audiences here will be less attuned to the gravity of his jests and more sorely tried, perhaps, by the climax, as a line of Israeli shooters fire at a female Palestinian terrorist. Without warning, as if we were watching a striptease, the movie sheds all realism and bares itself to the fantastic; the woman rises and spins, the Uzi bullets form a halo around her brow, and she slays her paltry attackers with special effects. The trouble is not that this is agitprop—though it is blatant enough, with its vengeful martyr ascending to the skies—but that it is kitsch, and the trouble with kitsch is that it feels like comedy with its hand down its pants, taking way too much pleasure in its own conceit. That isn't becoming to Elia Suleiman, who as both actor and director can conjure an unforced, gag-strung surrealism all his own, and who might like to think twice before evolving into the Jeff Koons of the Occupied Territories. At its best and quietest, "Divine Intervention" suggests—with a wit unavailable to "City of God"—that levity and threat are eternally clasped together, like the lovers' twining hands. ♦

The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X), published weekly (except for six combined issues: Feb. 17 & 24, Apr. 21 & 28, June 16 & 23, July 14 & 21, Aug. 18 & 25, Dec. 22 & 29) by The Condé Nast Publications Inc. (4 Times Square, N.Y., N.Y. 10036-6592), which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers, Inc. Vol. LXXVIII, No. 43, January 20, 2003. Periodical postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. Authorized as second-class mail by the Post Office Department, Ottawa, Canada, and for payment of postage in cash. Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian goods-and-services-tax registration number R123242885. Registered as a newspaper at the British Post Office.
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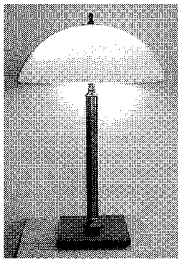

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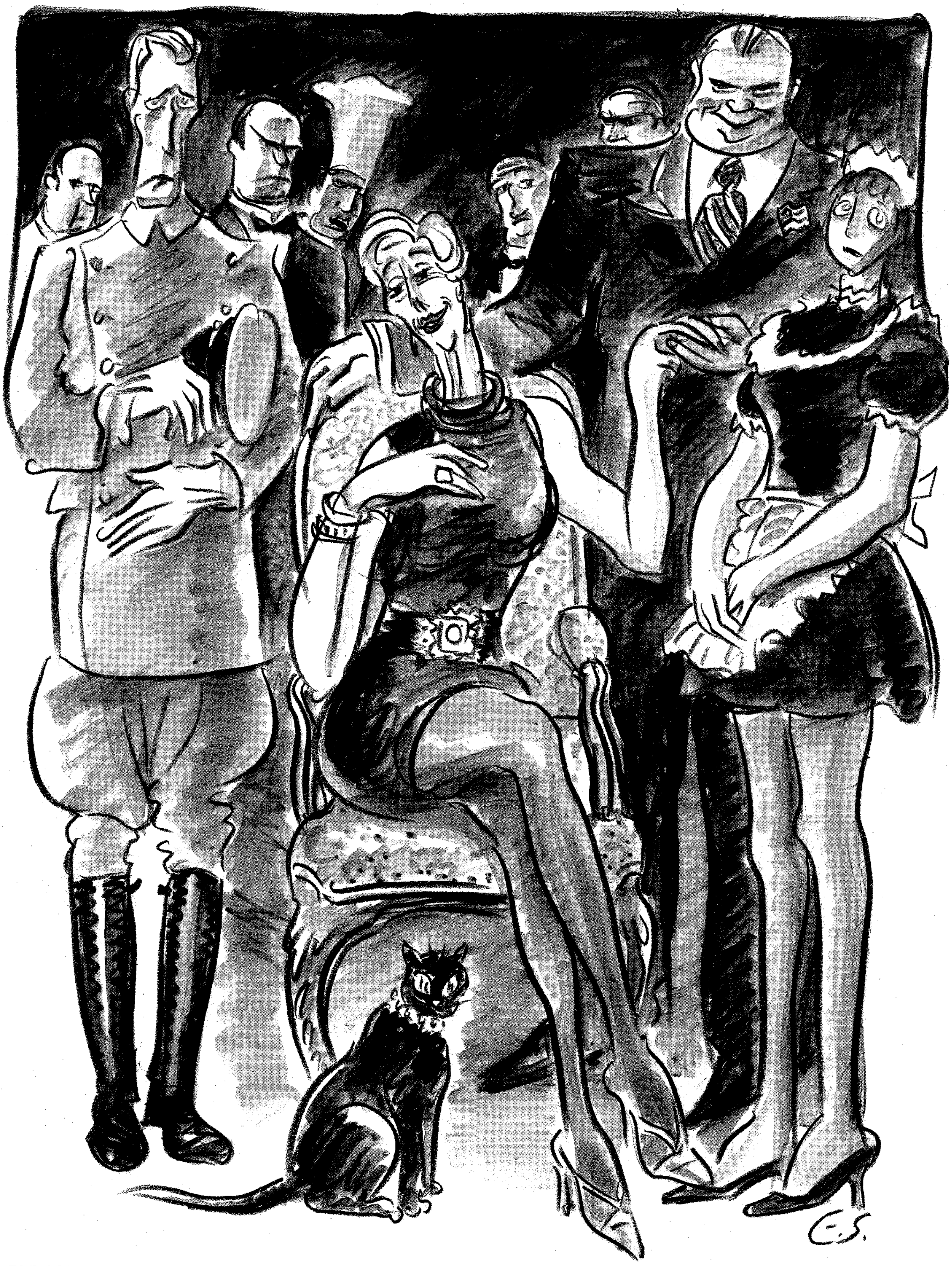
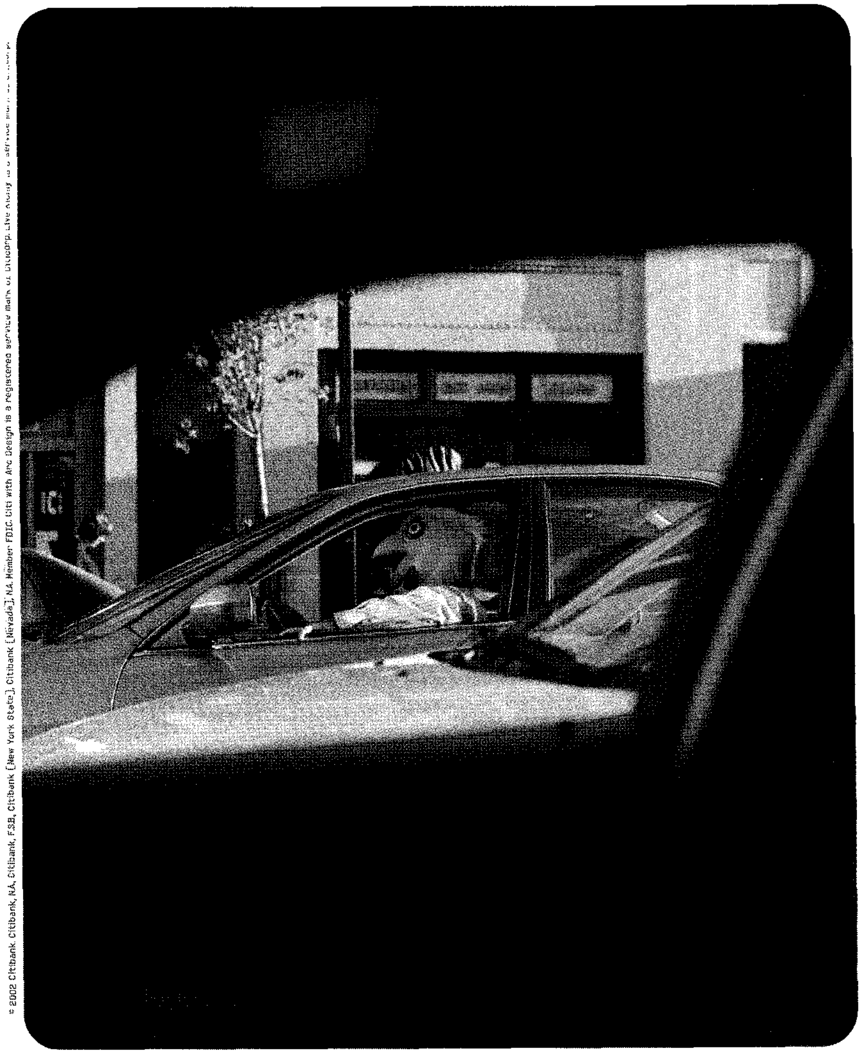


RUMOR OF THE WEEK BY EDWARD SOREL *According to usually unreliable sources, the President's next stimulus package will make domestic help tax-deductible, thus reducing the ranks of the unemployed and easing the loneliness of the well-to-do.*



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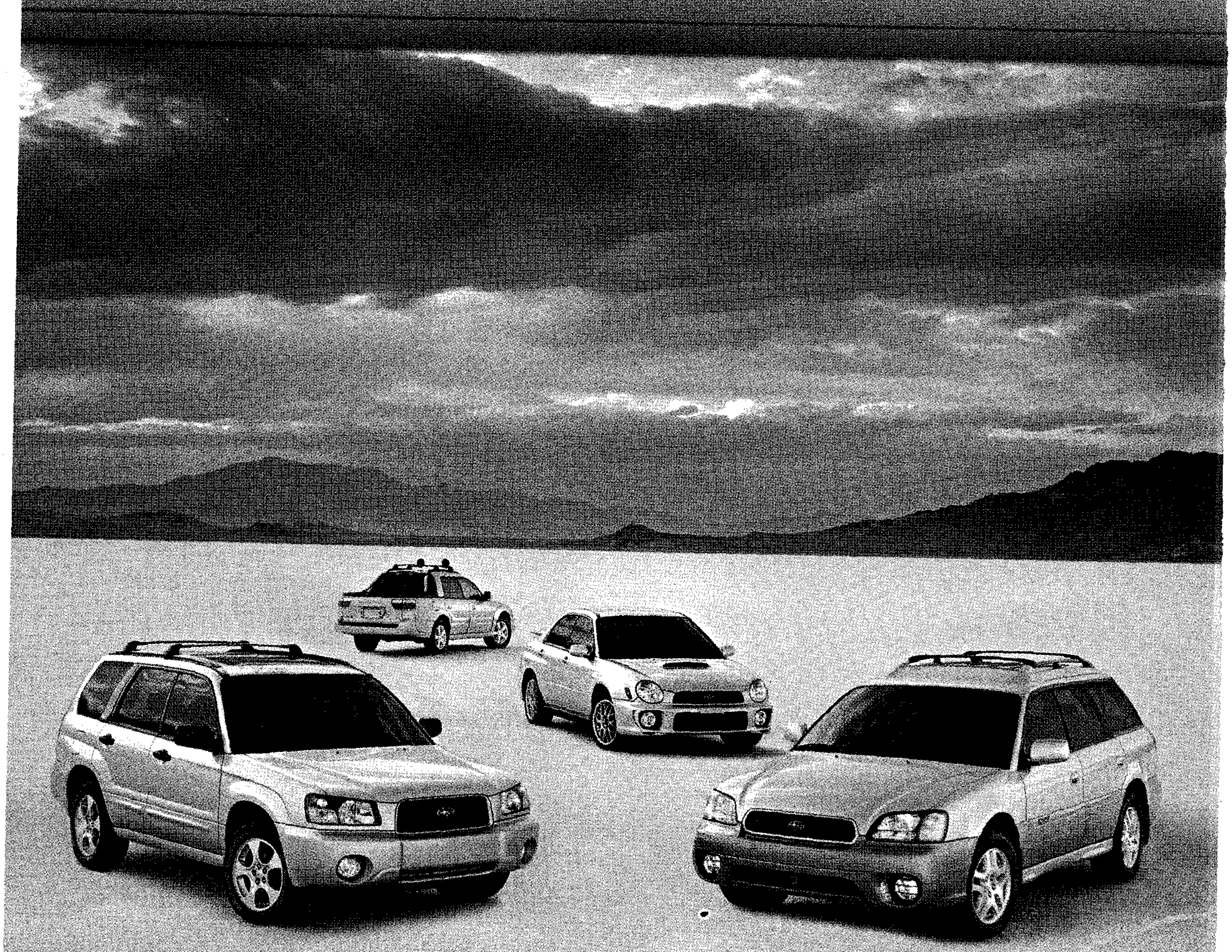

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